The Pulpit

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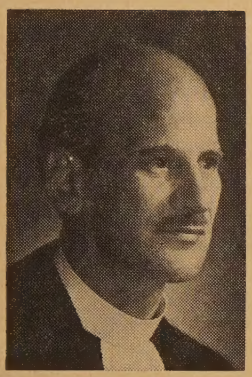
A Journal of Contemporary Preaching



Johnstone G. Patrick:

God, the Banker

Lawrence Lowell Gruman • Marks of a Christian Family

Kenneth O. Eaton • The Priesthood of Parents

Ernest Lee Stoffel • The Silence of the Prophetic Voice

Richard Allen Bodey • The Joy of the Ascension

MARK RICH

FOLK RELIGION AND BIBLICAL FAITH

VOL. XXXII, No. 5 MAY 1961

The Pulpit

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PULPIT POST

A Real Scout

DEAR G. HOBAB KISH: Blessings on you! You are a man after my own heart, but how dare you do it? I liked your Mourners Bench (March) calling for spiritual dieticians with both grace and courage, so sadly needed today. And your reference to nondirective counseling is excellent.

Keep up the good work, friend Hobab. (Wasn't he the guy who did not care to have Moses "do him good" but wanted to be "eyes across the desert"?) He was a real Scout.

I wish I knew your real name; I could get to know you better and appreciate your services properly.

CLAUDE W. WARREN
St. Mary's Hospital
Wausau, Wisconsin

Permission Granted

SIR: I was distressed to read your December article on the list of 10 words that could be well omitted from articles and sermons, and since then various letters to the editor supporting this view. This is like saying I will cut off my hand because I use it too much, or I must stop calling my wife "Dear" and find a new name for her.

If these words help us in presenting the gospel message accurately, and *if* they have meaning for our congregation, then USE THEM. This does not mean that we should include them in every sentence, but let's not "throw the baby out with the bath."

GRAY W. HAMPTON, JR.
Sunset Hills Presbyterian Church
Charlotte, N. C.

Preaching for the Church

SIR: Anyone who has done even a little reading in the field of homiletics can only agree with Dr. Massa (Feb.) that there is a notable lack of "an adequate theological understanding of the nature and purpose of preaching."

A student, therefore, is privileged when he has a teacher who can give him in class what the literature lacks.

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The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

VOLUME XXXII MAY 1961 No. 5

Questions About Relevancy

IN HIS translation of the Pentateuch Luther wrote, "I endeavored to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew." Undoubtedly this takes the zeal for relevancy too far. To make Moses wholly German is as bad as leaving him entirely Jewish. But Luther's excessiveness at this point is refreshing in a day when an increasing number of homileticians chide the concern and effort of preachers to make their sermons pertinent to the day in which they are preached. The theory is that the proclaimed Word needs only to be proclaimed since it carries in itself the power to relate itself to the needs of all men in all times. It follows that analysis of the current situation is unnecessary and efforts to shape the proclaimed gospel to the analyzed situation are absurd. So runs the thought of those who rebuke all talk of relevancy and communication.

This approach to preaching raises serious questions about the appropriateness of any attempt to apply what we preach to the contours of our age. It is a radical view which runs counter to what most of us have been taught about the purpose of the sermon and it can be in part explained — though not dismissed — on the basis of the theological presuppositions out of which it rises. But it is also in part a wholesome recoil against the kind of life-situation preaching in which, to paraphrase P. T. Forsyth, we not only preach to our age but also preach our age. Not all topical and life-situation sermons have fallen into this trap, to be sure; but so many have that the rebuke is needed and should be graciously accepted. Too much of our preaching is merely the conservation which our culture carries on within itself.

Let us admit that we cannot *make* the gospel relevant. I know no one who believes that we can, despite the fact that a slip of the tongue sometimes brings such words to our lips. We know that the gospel is either germane or not and we know that the way we handle it cannot make it one thing or the other. But to admit that the gospel is God's Word to all men in all ages and that it is valid whatever we do to it — this is not to solve the problem of the relevancy of the ministry, of preaching or of the church. The actuality and the vitality of the gospel do not prevent the ministry from being superficial, the sermon from being impertinent or the church from being peripheral. It is folly in our preaching to assume that substance automatically and inevitably finds its most efficient structure. It is irresponsible to assume that content inerrantly evolves into proper form and technique. It is a dereliction on our part to assume that the message for which we have been made the witnesses will in spite of us become flesh and dwell among men. Life, too, is an actual and vital force; it has an inner creative reality; nevertheless, there are aberrant forms of life. If in our preaching we depend solely upon the actuality and the vitality of the gospel we preach and are indifferent to or even contemptuous of the needs and the problems of communication, we can expect that through our words and lips the gospel will be maimed and muted by the aberrant forms which we permit it to take.

In these days it is not in vogue to appeal to the example of Jesus. Therefore let us do so. The record of his preaching and teaching is often preceded by such words as, "Seeing the multitudes. . . . And he looked round about on them which sat about him." This is to say that Jesus took note of the people; he met them where they were; he took account of their need. Though there was an abundance of solid food, he sometimes, like Paul, gave them milk. Though the eons would collide in his life, he talked to them about Galilean days. Though the kingdoms of his day challenged the King of all kingdoms, he preached the healing of the brokenhearted, the deliverance of the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, the liberating of the bruised. He proclaimed but he also related the proclamation to the needs of the people. If this is life-situation preaching, we should do more of it. The proclamation must pass through men who look round about on the people.

It was also said of Jesus, "Without a parable spake he not unto them." This is to say that Jesus introduced into the minds and hearts of his listeners what they did not know and did not understand through the apertures of what they did know and did understand. In relating the Kingdom to a pearl or a mustard seed or leaven Jesus showed no disrespect for the Kingdom nor any doubt of God's power to make known his will to his people nor

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God, the Banker

By Johnstone G. Patrick

I know whom I have trusted, and I am certain that he is able to keep what I have put into his hands. . . . — 2 Timothy 1:12.
(Moffatt's Translation.)

AN atheist announces, "I don't believe"; an agnostic acknowledges, "I don't know"; and a pagan proclaims, " I don't care." None of these ways of looking at life, however, really satisfies us intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. They are all too negative. We need and, in our worthiest moments, we want something positive. We want to know to what in the unseen our spirit aspires, and to whom in the beyond our being responds. We want to know, in a world of continuous change, what the great Goethe wanted to know — how to concern ourselves with what is abiding. We want to be done with doubt and uncertainty and be able to say about God not "I think," or "I suppose," or even "I believe," but, "I know," and really mean it when we say it.

What, after all, is the sense in having a God about whom we have to do a great deal of guessing and about whom we know nothing definite? Why, if there is any real knowledge to be had, should we pray as someone once prayed, "O God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul"? What help for everyday living can we possibly derive from believing that God is "an oblong blur," or that there is "a God-shaped blank" at the big beating heart of the universe? What, when all is said and done, is the use of trusting ourselves — what we are, what we have, and what we hope to be — to "the Somewhat which we name but cannot know"? Surely, as intelligent beings, we want an attitude to life and to God, its Author, that is founded firmly and fairly on some bit of positive and personal knowledge.

"I know whom I have trusted," says St. Paul, in his second letter to a young well-bred Lystrian lad, "and I am certain that he is able to keep what I have put into his hands . . . " And St. Paul, it should be pointed out, took some convincing. A man of first-class intellect, he certainly would not be duped into believing without some undeniable evidence. But God, in the shape and substance of a Son of Man, had broken into the human situation, and, in the person of the persecuted Jesus Christ, had burst into his own life and just wouldn't stay out. So St. Paul, weighing carefully the evidence of all that had happened since his first encounter with Christ on the dusty road to Damascus, could say with unshakeable conviction, "I know whom I have trusted, and I am certain. . . . "

Apart from the particular reference and personal application of the Apostle's words, there are at least two underlying convictions expressed in them to which we may give earnest heed because of their lasting value. One is a conviction about living and the other a conviction about life. When a man of long experience and complete sincerity talks like this, it means that behind his uttered self, behind his fierily-furnaced faith, behind his conception of his office, behind his strenuous struggles to realize it in service and sacrifice, lie some basic beliefs, some crucial convictions about life itself, and how living is to be regarded. He is pondering what he has tried to do, and there emerges a revelation of certain fundamental estimates which have been shaping his history. Living is a trust and life is a security — these are the two unspoken but implied convictions.

First, then, St. Paul felt that living was a trust, an opportunity, a call to venture something out upon life. It is an investor's figure of speech in which he states it. He calls what he has been and what he has done, the sum of his activities and influence, "my deposit." He has counted right living as a putting out of something worthy into the world's value, the lodging of an increasing deposit, a contribution of life's capitalized good. The apocalyptic conception of a celestial accountancy, and of an audit when "the books are opened," was with this massive-minded man a working conception of life. The Seer of Patmos projected the idea. The Apostle of the Gentiles actualized it. He

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JOHNSTONE G. PATRICK, *born in Scotland, was graduated from Spurgeon's Theological College, London, England. He has had four pastorates in four different countries: the first, in London, England; the second, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands; the third, Ontario, Canada; and the fourth, his present charge, First Presbyterian Church, Sayre, Pennsylvania.*

knows himself infinitely a debtor, yet he dares to believe that in the books one day to be opened, a credit page is being filled with what he so finely calls "my deposit." It was far from his mind — nothing could have been farther from it — that this credit side of the account could ever hold that whereof he might glory, much less that in the audit his solvency and salvation would there appear. His only glorying was of another and wiser and worthier order, and concerning that side whereon he was "written off" as debtor. Not in what he had but in what he owed — and he was over head and ears in debt to his Redeemer — was his reason for rejoicing.

Here, then, is the sparkling source and shining secret of all worthy living; a conception without which no life can come to anything but feebleness and futility. We are not alive and around to be recipients and absorbents only. As an investor handles capital are we to handle this trust of life, this lot of living, only not for the sake of our own wealth, save as we share the wealth of the whole "household of faith" which we have loyally striven to enlarge.

The second underlying conviction in St. Paul's sublime affirmation of his faith is a conviction about life. As living is an investment, life is good security, worth putting your best out upon and into, and your best may be counted safe when so ventured. It is going far to affirm, as St. Paul does, that living is a trust; it is going very much further, as St. Paul does, to affirm that life itself is trustworthy, and will in the long run play no honest investment false.

There is an ancient timidity which has afflicted man with frequent paralysis, a certain fear of life almost as deep as the love of life. Man has feared life as something capricious, double-dealing, ironical, and capable of playing curiously impish tricks. There is, to be sure, very much in life, as every one of us knows it, to make us feel sometimes that we are dealing with something terribly insecure, something in which a man's best may come to worse than nothing, and honest investments are played fast and loose with. Good men have lived nobly, and it has seemed as if life leered at them. They have died, and the causes they had lived to champion and serve have seemed no whit furthered, and every virtue they possessed and every victory won has seemed like a vapor vanished and lost. They let their light shine and the stray inconsequent winds blew it about, and at last blew it out, and the darkness, in spite of the brief candle, seemed darker than before. Men have felt this keenly and acutely and have said, "Why put value into such a business as life which never pays expenses? It isn't worth while. Let us eat, drink, and be merry; let us get what we can out of it, and hold hard what we get, and smile to see how many fools there are who still trust it." So it has come to pass that the seat of the scorner has never been empty, and many have felt wisdom's part to be that of the cynical spectator of life and its incalculable and inscrutable ways.

St. Paul was not ignorant of this aspect of life. Half his days he had been driven from pillar to post, and had seemed fair game for idle chance. Life, furthermore, was not growing any kindlier to him as he grew old. It had spelt homelessness, disappointments, and buffetings for him. No wonder he speaks as though he were beside himself. And quite soon his life of toil and pains would be at an end. Death was about to write "Finis" to the stern tale of his years, and write it in blood in the darkness, dreariness, and dampness of a dirty Roman dungeon. But he did not believe that life was the gambler's throw it looked. He did not believe that life was the chance it so often seemed. Still, in spite of the chains that chafed his old shins sorely, he held the unshaken and unshakeable confidence that life was an opportunity far more than a risk, and he was sure that he had not been duped in putting into it his best.

It is not the ones who put blood, toil, tears and sweat into making life great and good who feel that life is malign and mean. It is not those who trust life with their treasure who treat it as being something incurably and incorrigibly tricky. To such the world is not a stage on which the strutting characters, helpless in the net of fateful circumstance, are like little puppets jigged into love and hate, into peace and war, by some invisible showman who pulls the strings. To such life is not a meaningless jumble of inhibitions, a silly scheme of sorry situations, but means intensely and means good, because it means doing God's will, walking and working in rhythm with the divine purpose, living in the love of Christ. "I am crucified with Christ," says St. Paul, and he is their spokesman; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

We know what a wealth of wisdom St. Paul had to put into life, wisdom with its bearings upon matters political and social as well as on individual lives. We know, too, how deep was his discerning insight into all the recesses of the human heart. But St. Paul, the missionary *par excellence,* can never be a living character to us till we see in him the man who could say, "He loved me and gave himself for me." It was a personal relationship which linked him in life with his Lord. What the love of Christ did for him he tells us in another of his illustrious letters. It "constrained" him. It was like a persistent pressure which would not let him turn away from the way of God's will or halt.

We have been occupied in the main with generalities until now, while St. Paul was specific. He is talking of his own particular individual calling and service when he says: "I know whom I have

trusted, and I am certain that he is able to keep what I have put into his hands . . . " To discover the nature of his life's investment we must go back in this section of his letter. He is speaking with his usual spiritual glow of the Gospel of Jesus, of which he says, "I have been appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher." A fourth term he adds to his description of himself, "and this is why I suffer as I do." And so the cause for which he suffers — and suffering is the badge of his tribe — is what this superb sufferer regards as being securely lodged and effectively guarded.

The herald's investment, then, is high on his list, the deposit of the Christian preacher. Very faithful has he been to this divine appointment, and he has the daring to declare that his speaking forth of the Word of Life has not vanished into empty air. It is not lost, but lodged somewhere. Whatever of value his preaching has carried has been mounted guard over. When you think of it, this is a triumph of assurance, for there is nothing that seems more fugitive, nothing more completely at the fitful mercy of other folk's fickle moods, nothing so easily nullified and knocked on the head by incidental circumstances, in the preacher, the hearer, and even in the place and time, than preaching.

St. Paul is absolutely sure that the seed he has sown will, in God's own good time, come to flower and fruit. "My deposit," in the terms of preaching, is safe, for it is in the hands of the Eternal One.

What St. Paul says, and has said, as a herald has its point and place in the eternal plan and purpose of God. And what he says about the investment of his life as an apostle, a teacher, and a sufferer. His ministry as an apostle has been more important than his message as a preacher; his responsibility has been larger than his utterance. What he was, and what he is, in himself, in all that made his personality, the influence of his character, his bearing, his very looks, as an apostle, is of more worth than what he says, and has said, as a herald. For in himself he has either mirrored or misrepresented his Master.

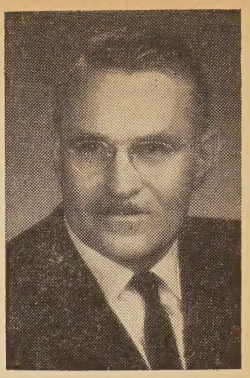
St. Paul, more than any man living or dead, could say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." He could also say — and it is equally important, if not quite so poetic — "God is my Banker, and the investments of my little life are in his large, strong, safe hands." He was always doing deeds, too, that deserved and demanded heaven's wealth to sustain him in his serviceable ministry, and he never lost a chance of passing on the thought of the infinite, inexhaustible, "unsearchable riches" of the heavenly bank. In finishing his famous letter to his friends at Philippi, for instance, he draws their attention to his heavenly Banker. "You have sent me a generous donation to my fund for the poor saints at Jerusalem. You were kind enough to share my concern for these poor folk; I can never repay you for it, the repayment shall reach you by way of heaven. I am remitting my love-debts to the heavenly bank and my Banker shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Too many in our time regard life as being a brutal business. Brutal, because whatever else we may "bank" upon, we may "bank" upon the forgetfulness and thoughtlessness of most of those who ought longest to remember, upon the selfishness of those who ought most generously to give. But St. Paul — that superb sufferer — has fairly scotched the lie that leads to such a silly attitude. He has, in effect, and in terms of real flesh and blood, furnished a fresh beatitude. Here it is: "Blessed is that man who 'banks' his whole being upon God."

Faced, then, with seeing so little done for all our serving, we can say, "I know whom I have trusted, and I am certain that God never wastes. He never wastes his servants' trust, never wastes his servants' words or woes, pains or pennies, never wastes his servants' 'blood, toil, tears and sweat,' never wastes his servants' time or talents." In the words of that Certain One through whom he speaks, and in whom we find him fully revealed, God always "gathers up the fragments that remain, that nothing be wasted." Faced with the problem of pain, we can say, "I know that all things work together for good to them that love God." And somehow it is this assurance that makes even the hardest lot in life bearable and strengthens the back for the weight of the heaviest burden — that "crabbed cross." Faced with the riddle of life and existence, we can say, "I know whom I have trusted, and I am certain that the all-wise and all-loving God governs all." To attain to such a knowledge is to discover rhyme and reason in living, is to find a meaning and a *motif* in life that lifts it from the humdrum into the realm of the holy, is to realize that the contradictions of life are understandably purposive and all the discords of living somehow come into harmony. Faced with the mystery of death, we can state stoutly, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and because he lives I shall live also."

Down the long corridor of time, through St. Paul and his spiritual descendants, Christ is calling to us, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and we must learn to take him at his word and live by it.

The investment of a life is only safe as it rests securely upon the full-minded, wholehearted, unconditional acceptance of the lordship, the leadership, of Christ. Only when we have entered into the fellowship of prayer and service and communion with him can we echo the exciting words of St. Paul, "I know whom I have trusted, and I am certain that he is able to keep what I have put into his hands, till the great Day." Such an investment, lodged with such a Banker, will make all life — even for the least and the lowliest alive at this time — thrillingly livable.



Folk Religion and Biblical Faith

By Mark Rich

IN the 19th century when churches began to dot the landscape of the expanding nation there came into ascendancy a religious expression which may be called folk religion. We shall define folk religion as an expression of the Christian faith which flows out of the common life of the people. At its highest expression it issues from the warm hearts and minds of people; at its lower levels it is rote and tradition. Folk religion is a religion of easy acceptances. It may be good, neutral or bad.

Folk religion is prevalent today. A visit to rural churches shows how widely it is approved. It is strummed and heralded on the air waves. It has adherents in high places. To understand folk religion better, let us examine some of its characteristics.

Folk religion is sentimental. When an organist expresses it, the tremolo stop is drawn out to play hymns and songs in theatrical style. At funerals the music stirs the already overburdened emotions by emphasis upon the loss and tragedy. It is often vague in its hope, as expressed in "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere."

Folk religion likes a chummy God; one who is pleasant to get along with, a good fellow, well met. The poem by Elisabeth Burrowes describes this God:

> God, a la Mode
> They tell me God is very great,
> Immeasurably deep and high;
> I want a simple, friendly God
> Above a near and tender sky;
> I want Him to be wise, yet not
> Too much more wise than I.
>
> I want a God who takes away
> My sins, as soon as done or said,
> A God who gives me what I ask,
> Of cake, as well as daily bread
> And lets me take Him out at night
> And pat Him on the head.*

Folk religion is man-centered. The minister proclaiming a folk religion may appear at worship service in sports jacket, "loud" sox, and flashy tie. He is evident and central as he fusses and wanders about in advance of a service and sometimes during it. The man-centered faith sings songs that have little to do with God. A morning worship service I attended recently began with the song "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." An otherwise inspiring installation service was preceded by the organ prelude "I Walked in the Garden Alone," played full tremolo. A congregation at an anniversary service seemed to find satisfaction in what was termed an old hymn, "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?" Should a man from space visit these services, he could easily conclude that the people had gathered for a chummy, cheery, rollicking get-together. He might not understand that the purpose was to worship God.

Folk religion is frequently expressed in low cultural forms. The untrained minister often uses abominable English and shocks the English teacher in the congregation by his barbarisms. The music has felt the strong impress of the waltz, the jazz band, and "country music." There is little depth in poetic forms and the style of the prose is not elevating.

Folk religion stresses sociability. We are all familiar with this manifestation. There is much handshaking and visiting; people enjoy coming together. In some churches this friendliness breaks into the service. People may come and go. The pastor "sort of visits" with the people throughout the service. At its best expression this gives tensile strength in American rural churches. It appeals to youth. It gives joy to the aged.

Folk religion is uncritical of itself. It is self-confident and sure that it has the truth. It is inclined to shun and ostracize the innovator or the questioner. It often makes bold and shallow as-

* *The Christian Century*, October 5, 1960. Used by permission of the author.

MARK RICH, *after serving as secretary of town and country work for the American Baptist Convention, New York City, for 14 years, became professor of rural church at the Rural Seminary of the Missouri School of Religion, Columbia, Missouri, in 1952. A graduate of Linfield College and Colgate Rochester Divinity School, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at Cornell University, majoring in rural sociology. Dr. Rich is an advisory member of the department of town and country church of the National Council of Churches, sponsors of Rural Life Sunday.*

surances. Sometimes this kind of faith places more confidence in the skill of printers and proofreaders than it does in God. Yet, there is much of this religion abroad.

Folk religion is uncritical of some of the basic sins of its society. It tends to accept the standards of its society as representing God's way. Of course the folk religionist condemns drinking, swearing, and kindred sins. Yet the same person may assume that the American way of life as expressed in personal goals in business, foreign relations, and military operations is right. Folk religion often considers the status quo as good. It is uncritical of deep-rooted weaknesses in its society.

Folk religion tends to be unaware of the implications of change to the message and methods of the church and of religion. I recently attended "preaching meetings" conducted by one of the primitive American religious groups. During the service I was overcome with a feeling of living in the 19th century. There was little sense of relevancy to a modern world.

Folk religion tends to be local. It can be singularly unaware of the world scene with the contest of cultures and civilizations, the race between selfishness and altruism and between survival and extinction. When these matters are treated they are often made to fit into arbitrary schemes in which cause and effect have no part.

Folk religion is lacking in historical sense. It is often prone to have Jesus living at the time of Abraham or Isaiah. It thinks of the new as old and of the old as very modern. It is quite unaware of the movements of history and of the forces and influences which mold life. By this measure a hymn written in 1900 and beloved by an old man from the days of his youth is an old hymn. In the same way, Bernard of Clairvaux's "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," written in the 12th century, is a new hymn because the people do not know it.

Folk religion tends to be otherworldly. The hope of heaven centers attention and devotion to life hereafter. Consequently it pays more attention to getting ready to die than in putting Christ into life.

Folk religion is often narrow in scope. Folk religion and pietism are often closely intertwined. The emphasis is upon a person's individual responsibility as separate from a social responsibility. The concern is for the state of soul and an inner relation to God and to Christ to the exclusion of social expression. Folk religion is content to leave Isaiah in the warm glow of a temple experience. It does not follow him out into the lives of the people.

Now let us review the place and force of folk religion. Folk religion never occurs in pure form. In describing it we have tended toward exaggeration in order to understand it. A man may possess what we shall term a biblical religion as a part of his religious expression and folk religion in other parts. As was indicated in the beginning of this discussion, folk religion is a prevalent Christian expression in rural America. In its less desirable forms it often exists in small churches with part-time nonresident and untrained ministers. It is most common where untrained lay people have full leadership in local churches.

All of us enjoy aspects of folk religion. We cannot imagine American rural church life without a good measure of it. It gives a certain warmth and democratic spirit to our church fellowship. A German boy summed it up when he said of the rural church in the United States, "Somebody is always getting up and doing something." We must recognize that, by and large, those who are most given to folk religion are often a noble, godly people within limits. Their practice is far better than their forms of expression. They may like ditties that have little Christian concept, but they "love the Lord" implicitly and they do great good for their God and their fellows. They may be better Christians than some who hold a higher concept of the Christian faith. I presume that each one of us owes a large debt to such people and that we have been abundantly blessed by them.

But we are not satisfied with folk religion because it has lacked ability to meet some of the most serious problems of the church in town and country. We are not satisfied with it when it is carried into the sanctuary as a substitute for the worship of God. We are not satisfied when it does not demand of Christians what it should and does not seek to build them up in God as whole persons as they should be built up.

This generation is faced with the challenge to accept a more biblical religion. By biblical religion we refer to the kind of Christian faith which keeps central those things which the Bible keeps central, which includes those things which the Bible centrally included and which represents the values and length and breadth of the faith that is proclaimed in the Bible.

Biblical religion is God-centered. "In the beginning God." God then and God now — God always. Biblical religion calls its adherents to come to him in the spirit of "Holy, Holy, Holy." It calls out "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving." It reminds the congregation "This is the day the Lord hath made."

Biblical religion seeks to express itself at the highest possible level. There is no book superior to the Bible as literature. A good hymn book is inspired in form and content. The minister presses to declare the unsearchable richness of Christ and God with exactness. He uses the most precise and persuasive language he can master. His poetic expressions seek to capture the nuances of speech through which are conveyed the depth and breadth of that which it proclaims. Biblical faith has produced such inspired expression as "The Canticle to

the Sun," "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go," and "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart."

Biblical religion is critical of itself. Those who seek it have great assurances, but they walk as directed toward a larger light. They are aware of man's frailties and that he easily confuses his own will as the will of God. So he examines his faith even as did Jesus who said, "It has been said, but I say." This self examination grows out of the faith that God's revelation is too vast for the narrowness of man's mind and that as man opens himself to God he can learn and experience an ever enlarging faith.

Biblical religion is critical of its society. That fact presents a dilemma for the Christian. He reads his Bible. He prays that in sincerity he may do the will of God. Then he looks out into the world and finds so much that is wrong. On television he sees vicious forms of commercialism. He hears money seekers praising the merits of wares that have no value or are positively harmful. He sees leaders whose God is self and who, if followed, will lead the world headlong to destruction. He sees people grasping and reaching for baubles. The man who would have a biblical religion is deeply burdened by these things. He must do something. As Amos and Isaiah and Abraham stood against evils in society, so the biblical religionist must stand. It may be through constructive measures, in teaching, in preaching, but he must stand. He is critical yet hopeful. He lives in the world yet presses toward a better one.

Biblical religion is aware of change and takes it into account. The Old and New Testaments record marvelous adaptations to change. The Old Testament faith grew and matured in change. The Gospel of Jesus broke with the past and it fulfilled the past. A biblical religious faith brings the timeless to expression in the tumultuous sea of change.

Biblical religion is historical. It scans, to the best of its reach, the vistas of history. It traces the marks of the hand of God through the centuries. It is aware of trends and movements.

Biblical religion is aware of the forces that shape history and of God's place in it.

The scope of biblical religion is broad. It goes with Isaiah into the temple where God reveals himself in ineffable sublimity. It goes out with Isaiah; out to where God directs him to express his faith in justice at the gate, and in assistance to widows and orphans. Biblical faith goes with Isaiah to establish a government good for all, to the meadows where the lion and the lamb play together, and to fields where bounteous harvests are reaped. Yes, biblical religion sees all life and all its expressions as under God.

A biblical religion seeks to discern what is ephemeral and what is lasting, what is false and what is true, what is timely and what is timeless. Then it seeks to hold on to that which has value and which endures. Thus it is not afraid of change but adjusts to it.

What we have said may seem to condemn folk religion as bad and commend biblical religion as good. The faith that we will hold is a combination of both biblical religion and a high order of folk religion. Many rural Americans seem to want that. Some yearn for a larger faith and a nobler expression of it.

We want churches established firmly on faith in God as understood through Jesus and in our experience of him. For instance, we want a church which in worship calls us into the presence of God. We want the organist, the choir, the congregation, and the minister to be aware of the purpose of a worship service.

We also want a friendly church — perhaps a folksy church. We like the fellowship supper. We like after-church visiting. We like joy to abound. We thrive on work bees. We don't mind sentimentalizing at anniversaries if it is kept within bounds. We may balk at "Will There Be Any Stars" as not representing biblical faith, but can take in our stride "Brighten the Corner" when sung at the right time and place. All need some easy assurances and a simple faith humbly accepted and easily grasped. Many of us are like that.

But woe to us as lay leaders in the churches and as ministers of Jesus Christ if we are satisfied to lead people at a low level. Folk religion should not boldly stalk into the place of worship, trouncing noble concepts, values, and expressions of the Christian faith. Biblical religion in its depth, breadth, and height is the kind of faith that we need for redemption. Our churches need it as man needs oxygen. The time is at hand for leadership in a warm, persuasive, and powerful expression of biblical faith. We are the leaders to whom the challenge comes.

We should give attention to one more question. It has to do with the way in which our churches can grow into acceptance of a more biblical religion.

I would propose that this be done through a study of the purpose of the church. The story is told of a little boy who went to a women's meeting with his mother. During the worship period silence was observed; an eternity it seemed for the restless lad. At last, he broke into the silence with a loudly whispered query, "Mama, is what we are doing now doing anybody any good?"

The boy was asking to know the purpose of an activity. That is precisely what churches should do. They should ask why they are doing what they are doing. They should ask how can we best express the Christian faith. Are we fulfilling the purpose of the church? What is God's will for us through this church? How do we worship God? These are some of the questions we should be asking.

I would propose that every church devote at

least one meeting of officers and congregation each year to asking such questions. Every organization and group in the church should ask them. If this is done seriously, against the background of the Bible, with open minds and with open hearts, churches will keep on the track. They will understand how better to balance folk religion and a biblical faith.

If we find the answer many wonderful things will begin to happen in our churches. New purposes and activities will be found. The choirs may enter a new era of the expression of majestic praise and worship of God the Creator. The church may embark on new training programs. The church will have a larger interest in the daily lives of people, in their work, play, and home life.

The church will be more human but also more divine. It will better satisfy the whole range of life. It will look up and forward. It will meet change with a radiant faith and in the midst of change cling to that which is eternal and which is new in each age.

THE MOURNERS BENCH

By G. Hobab Kish

THERE were those who referred to the early Methodist Circuit Riders as "Now Men." They came with a promise of something happening now and they thought it quite possible that a man might have his life changed in a moment. Whether or not God performs instantaneous conversions has been the subject of long and often dull, theological debate. But the frontier preachers never had any doubt in this matter. They could not stay and spend a year or more in one place. If they could not expect immediate results from their preaching, they were licked.

Now there are some instances in the New Testament to suggest that these brethren were right in expecting sudden experiences of salvation. It happened that way to Paul. Of course there was much back of that moment on the Damascus Road. But the immediate decision was made when Paul saw a light and heard a voice. Indeed, one of my friends says that the reason the brethren at Jerusalem were suspicious of him was because he had not gone through the membership class. They belonged to the school which keeps a fellow out of the church until he has had the proper training.

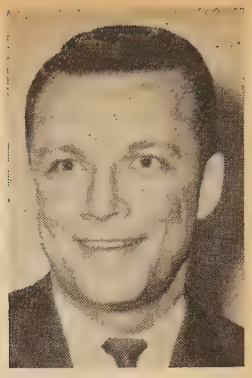
There was the incident of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. You remember that the Book of Acts tells about a man reading from Isaiah without comprehension. He welcomed Philip's offer to explain it to him. Now the preacher did not explain that first of all there are three, or maybe four, Isaiahs. The story says: "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:35). A little later, we hear the Ethiopian saying, "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?" It was done, and Philip was taken away by the Spirit and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

I am aware, brethren, of how essential nurture is and how important it is that men should have training in churchmanship. Let us not minimize these matters nor let us not think we have to make a choice between sudden spiritual happenings and long training. But let us consider what it would do for our ministry and for the church if we were to recapture the NOW spirit.

There is lacking in most of our services any sense of expectancy. Actually, we do not think much is going to happen, and we are not disappointed. Our Gothic cathedrals, our robed choirs, our educated presentations all create an atmosphere of relaxation and leisureliness. Fine! Our harried spirits are in need of rest. But we are also in need of a new life, a new direction, a new commitment. We are in desperate need of being born again. We need a miracle!

Are we going to turn over this part of the gospel to the tabernacle? Are we satisfied to leave the invitation to the evangelists? Is there any place for the promise of a mighty, immediate breakthrough to God in our services? Do we hold out any hope that our eyes may be opened now to the presence of the Lord Jesus? I wonder if we are not in great need of learning how to be "now men" again.

A few years ago when old Hobab was in seminary, much talk in theology centered around the word "crisis." I never objected to this term because it described the situation I was in most of the time. It is the situation a vast number of people are in right now. They are not drawn to fellowship which will put them through a training course or outline for them a six-year-study. They want someone to tell them how to find God in a hurry. Training and study are all a part of our program and we shall neglect them at our peril. But could we leave our discussions and our debates long enough to seek an immediate word from the Lord? It is a great thing to have a word for tomorrow. It is wonderful that ours is an eternal message. But, boys, what do you have to say about it NOW?



The Marks of a Christian Family

By Lawrence Lowell Gruman

IF you have come to hear sweet sentiments about the poet's dream of home you are in the wrong place. If you expect a family album of nostalgic recollection — of fresh-baked pies and Christmas jollity and family characters — you will not find it here. Such ornaments have their place, but they are not the stuff of family life. However, if you have come to be confronted with the claim of Christ on your family you have come to the right place. And not only you who are currently responsible for the family under your roof, but all who are a part of a family though the members be flung across the globe in transient society. And those of you whose family lives no more on this earth have an option on friends and associates who can yet be as a family to you.

In our critical times the family is the focal point of pressures unprecedented in history. Industrialization has left its mark of impersonality; organization its toll on individualism; intemperance makes staggering inroads on family happiness; commercial exploitation has robbed the dignity and lowered the moral standards of today's family. Still, the family has received these body blows gracefully enough to stand erect as the core of society. Where foundations have shaken loose, the family has, with great resilience, fought to hold firm to the ground on which the foundations themselves stand.

Yet the family as we know it is not indestructible. Recurring evidence of the breakdown comes in statistics on delinquency and divorce as well as in our own experience of uneasiness in shaping the family in which we live. So, because we must consider the ground of our being beneath the crumbling foundations, and because we know how fragile is the substance of our family life today, we turn to the findings of a great conference of Christians searching after these very things. In their discussions concerning the family, those attending the Lambeth Conference of 1958, reached the conclusion that the Christian family could be distinguished by at least seven marks:

1. *A Christian family seeks to live by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.* Yet the incredible ignorance about Christ today makes this difficult. Many think of him as a visionary poet or a homespun philosopher, but few adults take the time to study who he really was. Many think of Jesus as a glad-handing, smiling sales executive, but they haven't read the teachings that came from him: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." "Forgive seventy times seven." "Take up your cross and follow me." "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." The man who said those things is a stranger to many of you!

2. *A Christian family joins in the worship of God on Sundays in church.* Yet for a nation that calls itself Christian, for a nation which points the accusing finger of scorn at godless communism, we tragically neglect worshiping him. We do worship, wherever we are. We worship nature — the fish or elk or duck or snow-covered hillside — or we worship relaxation, or we worship ourselves. Of course we claim each of these has a high priority for us in a troubled world, a world which we must at all costs "escape." It ought not to appear strange that communists, and atheists too, look to our claims to godliness with a derisive sneer.

3. *A Christian family joins in prayer, Bible reading, and grace at meals.* Ah, but these things are a lost art. We say they "belong to another generation" and "we have no time for them." Then we squander our time on TV, coffee breaks, socializing, and committee meetings. Thus we do the irreligious things faithfully, while religious activities are done haphazardly at best.

4. *A Christian family is forgiving to one another and accepts responsibility for one another.* We know the birthplace of virtues is the home; yet we shrug off our responsibility there, excusing

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ourselves by saying "anything goes at home." It must be clear to each of us that if the home fails here, neither church nor school teaching can hope to be effective. How, then, can we casually turn our children over to a Sunday school for a pitiful few hours a year and expect a teacher to make up for all the failures we have produced in our homes? Forgiveness is difficult, responsibility is costly. If they are to be learned, they must come through the daily experience in the family.

5. *A Christian family shares together in common tasks and recreation.* At last! Here's something we understand: togetherness. But how we love to wear the masks of pride (so easily hurt) and security (so readily undermined) and righteousness (so handily disproved) that keep us apart though we live under the same roof.

6. *A Christian family uses abilities, time, and possessions responsibly in society.* Do the members of your family? Or do you find, in looking back, that you have been living for your purposes, for your gain? "Responsibly" is the word here, and it means we're responsible to someone outside ourselves. A few years ago, when a wealthy man in New York left his fortune "to God," the probate court reported: "After a diligent search we can report we cannot find God in the city of New York." We had better ask ourselves about our own city, "Are we here responsible to anyone besides ourselves?"

7. *A Christian family is a good neighbor, hospitable to friend and stranger.* The old saying goes, "The glory of the house is hospitality." The sharing of its bed and board is an ancient mark of the family's outgoing unselfishness. But real hospitality requires the sharing of ideas and imagination, of hopes and fears; and Christian hospitality means the sharing of one's witness to God with the friend and stranger.

So, if we were to take seriously these seven marks of a Christian family, most of us would have to plead innocent — or ignorant — to having any familiarity with them. But look again at these marks and you will see that they are habits and attitudes that may well grow out of a vital faith in God. Worshiping God, reading the Bible, praying, forgiving, being neighborly; these are simply some means of expressing the deep yearning after God which quickens the heart. These are the blossoming of a deep-rooted faith. And if you have ever tried to transplant a flower by snipping off the blossom and planting it, you know there's little use in imitating the habits that mark a Christian family.

You cannot cage the spirit of Christ in a set of requirements. So these marks are no criterion, no formula, no definition of a Christian family. They are simply patterns of life that may grow out of a deep Christian commitment — or they may not! A story from India tells of a holy man who was renowned for his pious, spiritual life. Each day he went into his hut and meditated in silence for many hours. Through the open door there came field mice which played on the dirt floor of the hut. When the mice began to disturb the holy man at prayer he brought a cat into the hut, tied it to the doorpost with a long piece of string and let the cat take care of the bothersome rodents. For thirty years the holy man's followers watched him at his prayers while the cat fed on the field mice. When the holy man died his followers anxiously tried to imitate him, so they each bought a cat and tied it to the doorpost of his hut. But not one of them ever became known for his pious, spiritual life. No wonder! There is little use in emulating the *things* that dedicated people do. First comes the dedication; then the habits will follow.

"Ah!" you say, "but I'm in a hurry. I like to get things done. I want this Christian family life so that I will be happy and so that we won't get into serious difficulties." Yes, you want to use Christianity so you can get your own way! Have you not learned that you can't use real Christianity — it uses you! Christianity is a faith that exalts sacrificial love, and you can hardly bend sacrifice into triumph — unless you see triumph in the cross.

Now I shall ask a question of you and you must answer, however you will. Do you really want to establish a Christian family more than you have wanted to do anything before? Are you willing to sacrifice something to establish it? Are you willing to give up bridge or bowling or hunting or skiing or coffee-ing or drinking? Any, or all, of these may have to go. You may not be able to have all of these and a Christian family too.

If you are answering the question as a kind of game where you hope to debate endlessly, a maneuver calculated to keep Christ at arm's length, you may as well call it quits now. Because you, slippery soul, are not sincere in your searching and you will never discover more than mocking emptiness.

A young man once went to a rabbi and asked, "Rabbi, I want to be sincere in my efforts to be a righteous man, but the trouble is that I am an insincere person. What can I do?" The rabbi replied: "Why don't you try being sincere?" At this, the young man was angered and he retorted: "Don't you understand? That's my problem. I cannot be sincere." Then the rabbi answered: "Then try being insincere and see where that gets you."

Now let's clear away all the insincerity, all the blossoms, all the marks of a Christian family and uncover what is at the heart of the matter. It is this: First of all you must give away your heart, with no strings attached. For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; give away your heart! Christianity is not a calculation, not a tool to get what you want. It is a means of relating yourself to

God! If you don't want that, forget about the superficial marks of the Christian. Nothing can be more offensive to God than for you to go about trying to look like something you have no desire to become. If you're serious about marrying someone you do it without laying down any conditions, and if you're serious about a Christian family you don't begin by laying down conditions like "I'll go along with it until it costs me something" or "Only so far and no farther." No, you'll begin by giving away your heart; giving it to God along with all your loyalty and your faith. Then there will be room for God to edge in and take over the reins of your life.

You do not like this. You want some trick, some technique to twist God's arm. You would go to a thousand meetings, read ten thousand books, but you would not like to give away your heart to God. There's no telling what he may require of you! If you could be sure that he would make no more demands than the pursuing of these seven marks of a Christian family, all well and good. But God does not stop there. He will require you to re-examine your job, your leisure time, your place in the community, your place in the church, your bank account, your habits, your friends, your gifts to charity. He will leave nothing untouched.

Now you are apprehensive lest God require you to live detached from the world in a monastic existence. You may be fearful that the pleasures of life will vanish in the face of stern duties. You may dread the thought of losing touch with some dependable habits. Your anxiety may prevent your taking a step towards God.

Come, now. You must be bold. If you want this new relationship badly enough, trusting in God will not be so difficult. As for the monastic fear, let it be known that God calls men to affirm life, and life in the throbbing midst of their problems. As for pleasures, God offers the exhilarating pleasure of simple integrity. As for your habits, they will be applied to making the widest use of every talent you possess. Of course you will be anxious, but your anxiety can be overcome in putting your hand into the hand of God.

Still, something else bothers you, because, for all our talk of giving away your heart, it's a vague kind of suggestion. How do you manage to give away your heart? Well, you focus your attention and your thoughts on God; you try to make your life follow the example and teachings of Jesus; you pray; you read the Bible; you worship God in church. In fact, you do the very things we spoke of earlier as the seven marks of the Christian family; not because there is anything sacred or self-righteous about them, but because they are practical steps you can take towards living closer to God. You can concentrate on these things, live in this framework in your home, take seriously each of these remarks for your own family. You will not claim that because you follow this way you deserve any particular credit. You will not hold yourself up as an example to others. But you will take satisfaction in the steady growth you make towards a richer life of the spirit. Life will not be the easier for you necessarily; you may well be required to make new steps into the unknown; you may uncover inadequacies in yourself and weaknesses in others; but you will search in these seven pathways because walking in them brings a sense of rightness you cannot find anywhere else, because they lead you closer to the presence of God. Christ becomes real; prayer becomes deep communion with God; the Bible opens up your understanding of yourself; worship becomes an experience of exaltation; forgiveness becomes the dearest gift you can give; neighborliness takes on richer meaning. These marks of the Christian family are not indelible evidence by which we judge others; they are rather the means by which we identify ourselves with the search after a Christian family. These are the means by which we begin giving away our hearts to God.

You will not succeed to your satisfaction in achieving a Christian family. You have embarked on an endless quest which demands all your heart, mind, and soul; and by your very humanity you will not fully succeed. But you have begun a journey which never ends. Sickness, tragedy, and death hold few terrors for those whose lives are already firmly linked with God. You cannot know, but you can possess a deep-running faith, that such a journey does not halt at death but that its final destination is reunion with our heavenly Father.

I do not know where or when you will begin the journey. Only you will know that. I do not know with which of these seven marks you may begin. You will know, and you will begin somewhere. I do not know where they will lead you. Only you, a unique creation of God, will be able to work out your own salvation. I cannot see any barrier to your beginning *now* to make God's work truly your own. Can you?

A Prayer

GIVE us an understanding, God, our Father, of our inner motives. As we see how wrapped up we are in our own well-being, teach us that the heights of manhood are reached by service. The noblest of men have found that the giving of self for others has brought the largest returns, yet always as a by-product — never as a moving force. So may we love thee for thyself alone and serve the little ones for whom Christ died with gladness because they need the cup of cold water, the kindly word. Amen. — *Hillyer H. Straton, First Baptist Church, Malden, Massachusetts.*

The Priesthood of Parents

By Kenneth O. Eaton

THERE are two ways to ruin an originally good thing: one is to commercialize it; the other is to sentimentalize it. Mother's Day has suffered on both counts. Believe it or not, I once saw a Mother's Day card — it was large and it was flashy — with this greeting, "To Uncle on Mother's Day"! Let's encourage everyone to get in on the act and make more money!

The other way by which strength and beauty can be drained from the observance of such a day is to encourage sentimentality, to indulge ourselves in pretty little customs without the slightest intention of emulating in our generation the qualities we praise in another. In order that Mother's Day might still retain some of the power of its original impulse, the church has sought to transform this day on the civil calendar into a day on the Christian calendar by observing a festival of the Christian home. The emphasis of the day shifts, then, to the role which God has assigned to all of us to whom he has given children, and we think today about the priesthood of parents.

We should stop thinking of priesthood as an exclusively Roman Catholic concept. One of the major thrusts of Protestantism is the experience and theology of the "priesthood of all believers." The aim of the Reformation was not the abolition of the priesthood but the abolition of the laity; of the notion that only a specially privileged and protected minority of men had the vocation of standing close to God, mediating and channeling the life of God to others. Reformation Christianity insisted that all Christians have the vocation not only of standing in direct relationship to God themselves, but also of becoming an instrument and channel through which God could make his love known in observable ways to every other man.

I know of no more illuminating concept with which to define our responsibilities as parents to our children than precisely this of the priest. The parent's role is essentially a priestly role.

For one thing, a priest is a mediator of God. He is God's representative. He is God's "stand-in." He is not a substitute for God, but an instrument and an ambassador, one who speaks for God and acts in God's name. When people see him they think of God. It is only when such a person makes exclusive and extravagant and absolute claims that we find this objectionable. The priest is the mediating person for his parish.

My suggestion is that, in basically the same manner, the parent is the mediating person for his children. It is largely through their experiences of trust and confidence and love with their mothers and fathers that children begin to learn that at the heart of the universe there is One who can be trusted and loved.

Whether we like it or not, during all their most formative years small children seem instinctively to invest their parents with Godlike qualities and prerogatives. If parents are uncaring, insincere, unjust, it is only a short step to the conclusion that God himself is likewise careless, unjust and untrustworthy. With inarticulate dismay, but with devastating logic, children then begin to feel that their whole world is shaky, unfair and unsafe.

If, as parents, our moods are too changeable; if our loving is inconstant; if our promises are broken; if our integrity is compromised; if our judgments are too hasty, our punishments inappropriate and administered only in anger; if we lead a double life, demanding more from others than we do from ourselves, teaching "respect for law" and running through red lights when nobody is looking, talking like perfect pagans with our adult friends and assuming a pious tone with small children, sending the younger members of the family dutifully to church and seldom cultivating any spiritual discipline for ourselves — if we lead this double kind of life — what chance will our children stand of cultivating attitudes of trust and confidence in the ultimate decency and rectitude of the universe? If

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our standard of morality is "how much can a person get away with?"; if our basic ethic is "it's all right so long as you don't get caught"; what likelihood is there that we shall be able to convey to the coming generation a firm confidence in a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness?

By the same token, however, if parents can be counted upon for some fundamental moral consistency, a hunger and thirst after righteousness, for a love that is never withheld, for a point of abiding return to which small, growing and troubled persons can go, both in their need and in their rejoicing; and if they can know they will find understanding even when they must experience judgment, then the whole wide world, with God at its center, will seem solid and friendly and loving even when in many stretches it is quite bewildering both to them and to us.

Parents not only teach, or fail to teach, religion in a formal way; they communicate, or fail to communicate, religion in this inarticulate, but even more profound and more subtle way. It all comes out very simply and beautifully in the following "Child's Prayer":

> O God, you are so great and I am so small, and there is so much about you that I do not understand. . . . But then perhaps I understand, at least a little. When I am glad because I know my father and mother love me, is it you who made them love? When I try harder because they trust me, is it you who made them trust? When I am happy because I have done something kind for someone, is it you who put that kind thought in my heart? Is it you who are in all things that I think are beautiful? If you are, then I know that I can love you, and I want to love you more and more. Amen.*

The love and goodness of God are not only taught, they are caught. They are not plucked from the air, they are mediated by persons. And parents are the mediators of the life of God. This is their priesthood.

Come now to a second function in the role both of the priest and of the parent: to be a good listener.

Ninety per cent of good counseling is not counseling at all, in the sense of offering counsel or advice or suggestion; it is good listening. At my ordination service in 1940, Dr. Everett C. Herrick, at that time the president of Andover Newton Theological School, gave the charge to the minister. Essentially, and unforgettably, he said two things: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Be strong; and listen. Learn to listen." I am still in the process of learning. And it is a good word not only for counselors and teachers and ministers and psychologists and physicians: it is a healing word in our relationships with one another. We can help people just by listening to them.

Really to listen to another person as he unfolds his deepest self to our view, or shares with us a bit of his dream, or lets us look for a moment or two into his problem and his pain, his desperation and despair, is to take that other person seriously as an authentic human being. It is not necessary that we agree with him or approve of all his opinions. But to hear not just the words he speaks but to apprehend the meaning of the words; to "get the message"; to interpret the signals; to welcome the gift of his confidence: this is to communicate, "spirit with spirit," in the depths of our humanness.

The cure for juvenile delinquency and the appalling increase of crime is a many-sided cure. Curfews, playgrounds, camps, recreation centers may all help. But the deeper secret of a stable and happy and creative personality is to be discovered in the priestly attitudes and habits of parents towards their children from their earliest years on up. Someone has suggested that there ought to be a great deal more sitting on the side of the bed than there is. He was referring, I presume, to those quite irreplaceable moments, the quarter hours and half hours, when the children are being put to bed for the night; when the day's events are being reviewed and shared; when wondering thoughts sometimes bubble up to the surface; when, in the quietness of the descending nighttime, confidences and questions seem easier to share. This is one of a number of unique opportunities that parents have to get close to their children, and their children to get close to them. But how often we miss them, or brush them aside in order to hurry on to what we assume are more urgent affairs!

Do we really "know" our own children? What are they thinking? What are they, deep down inside themselves? Without prodding or nagging, have we encouraged them to communicate with us, by our quiet interest and openness and availability? How often, how intently, how unhurriedly have we been willing to listen? And not just to hear the words, but to get the message so tentatively and brokenly — yet hopefully — conveyed by the words?

The extreme importance and relevance of all this comes home to us in a letter written by a so-called delinquent boy. His parents sent it to the *Kansas City Star,* saying, "Maybe if we share this letter it will help other parents."

> Dear Folks,
>
> Thank you for everything, but I am going to Chicago and try and start some kind of new life.
>
> You asked me why I did those things and why I gave you so much trouble, and the answer is easy for me to give you, but I am wondering if you will understand.
>
> Remember when I was about six or seven and I used to want you to just listen to me? I remember all the nice things you gave me for Christmas and my birthday and I was real happy with the things for about a week at the time I got the things, but the rest of the time during the year I really didn't want presents. I just wanted all the time for you to *listen* to me like I was somebody who *felt* things too, because I remember even when I was young I *felt* things. But you said you were busy.
>
> Mom, you are a wonderful cook, and you had every-

* Anonymous.

thing so clean and you were tired so much from doing all those things that made you busy; but you know something, Mom? I would have liked crackers and peanut butter just as well — if you had only sat down with me a little while during the day and said to me: 'Tell me all about it so I can maybe help you understand.'

And when Donna came I couldn't understand why everyone made so much fuss because I didn't think it was my fault that her hair is curly and her teeth so white, and she doesn't have to wear glasses with such thick lenses. Her grades were better too, weren't they?

If Donna ever has any children, I hope you will tell her to just pay some attention to the one who doesn't smile very much because that one will really be crying inside. And when she's about to bake six dozen cookies to make sure first that the kids don't want to tell her about a dream or a hope or something, because thoughts are important too to small kids even though they don't have so many words to use when they tell about what they have inside them.

I think that all the kids who are doing so many things that grown-ups are tearing out their hair worrying about are really looking for somebody that will have time to listen a few minutes and who really and truly will treat them as they would a grown-up who might be useful to them. You know — polite to them. If you folks had ever said to me: 'Pardon me' when you interrupted me, I'd have dropped dead. If anybody asks you where I am, tell them I've gone looking for somebody with time because I've got a lot of things I want to talk about.

Love to all,

As we think of this enormously important need for us to listen to our children do not our consciences accuse us? Do they not also accuse us, as Christian parents, when we ponder the great need to pray for our children?

For a good parent, like a good priest, is not only a mediator, and a listener, but also an intercessor: one who has a vocation for prayer.

Unless you yourself have had the experience of being the object of earnest and sustained prayer, you will scarcely be convinced of its importance. My mother not only prayed *for* me, but I can remember the times when she prayed *with* me. If we are too embarrassed to pray with our children, at least we can pray unceasingly for our children. Prayer will change our own attitude towards them and make us more sensitive to their needs, more open to their friendship, more encouraging to their confidences. Prayer will also surround them with an atmosphere in which their best thoughts and resolutions and impulses can breathe and grow. Just as the dry atmosphere in Arizona helps the asthmatic to breathe more deeply and freely; just as the aseptic atmosphere of the operating room is a prerequisite for successful surgery; just as the tar-free, smog-free atmosphere of rural New Hampshire is a powerful ally of health, so prayer for our children provides the spiritual atmosphere in which their authentic selfhood may be quickened and nourished by God.

What kind of prayers, spoken or unspoken, do we offer to God on behalf of our children? Are we in league with him for them? Is our only enthusiasm that they be well-clothed, well-fed, well-educated? That they find a good-paying job, a respectable place in society, a nice person to marry? These are all important in their place. But what about their souls? What about their discipleship to Christ? What about their usefulness in this tormented and precarious world in which so many causes and so many people cry out for the help of fresh talent, new ideas, and vigorous dedication? What about their relationship with their Creator and Redeemer to whom they owe all their powers and their very existence, and before whom, with us, they are responsible? If they are permitted to fall out of his hand, into what other hands do you think they will fall!

Thoughts on Preaching

✚ THERE is passion in the rainbow-coloured reverie of Jeremy Taylor, and in the white art of John Henry Newman, in the raging, roaring flame of Whitefield, and in the still, soundless heat of Wesley. — *George Jackson*

✚ H. W. BEECHER said about the use of humor in sermons, "When you are fighting the Devil, shoot him with anything."

✚ SAID to W. H. Lax by an uncle after he had broken down in his first sermon at the age of 17: "Never break down, lad; keep on talking — talk nonsense if need be — but *never break down.*"

✚ MANY a meandering discourse one hears, in which the preacher aims at nothing, and — hits it. — *Richard Whately*

✚ IF THE TEXT had the smallpox, the sermon would never catch it. — Old saying quoted by Tyron Edwards about sermons which begin with scripture and never return to it.

✚ THERE are three good reasons why we should fight for our language: the need for clarity of thought; the need to be understood; and the duty to enrich and not injure the noblest language and the richest literary heritage in the world. — *Lord Conesford*

✚ IT IS our God-given duty to preach regularly and systematically about the basic and perennial themes — the incarnation and the atonement, man's exceeding sinfulness and God's exceeding grace, the life of faith and the life everlasting. — *Robert J. McCracken**

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* From *The Making of the Sermon,* Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956. Used by permission.

The Joy of the Ascension

By Richard Allen Bodey

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. Luke 24:50-53.

NOBODY likes to say good-bye to those he loves. We are told that Joseph Parker, the preacher whose genius and eloquence attracted throngs to London's City Temple, never could bear leave-takings. He never said good-bye to visitors in his home. He never even liked to know when they were going. Early in their marriage he asked his wife to promise they would never bid farewell to each other, and the promise was kept.

I doubt if any of us goes to such an extreme in dealing with life's inevitable separations; yet we all feel keenly the pain of parting with friends and loved ones, especially when we know we shall not see them soon again, perhaps — in this world — never.

It is therefore puzzling to read of the disciples' behavior after Jesus ascended into heaven. They loved him above all others, above life itself. In the upper room they were heartbroken to learn he was about to leave them. In an outburst of despair Peter cried, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?"

But what a difference when in the dawn of the fortieth day after the resurrection he ascended before their eyes from the slopes of Olivet and vanished out of sight! Our text says, "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God." The manner and circumstances of his parting suggested its finality. He was gone. No longer would he appear to them as during the great forty days. Still, they shed no tears. Far from being heavy with grief, their hearts throbbed with the joy of a waking thrush on a bright day in June. Strange! Wonderfully strange.

We all rejoice on Christmas, for it is the festival of Christ's coming down to us from the Father's glory. We all rejoice on Easter, for it commemorates Christ's return to us out of the solemn, silent mists of death. But can we rejoice on this Ascension Day, as we recall Christ's departure from us into the invisible heavens? The first disciples did; once we catch their vision, so shall we. Then let us see what the joy of the ascension is.

In the first place, the joy of the ascension is the joy of a sympathetic heaven.

One of the most interesting and profitable biblical studies is the Old Testament concept of God. That concept is not complete in the opening chapters of Hebrew history. It grows and expands with the passage of time and the fuller light of further revelation. Little by little, God led his people into a more profound understanding of his nature and being. The God of Isaiah is the same God Abraham knew and worshiped, but Isaiah had a clearer, larger view of him.

The important thing to note is that as the concept of God expanded, men came to feel that he was far removed from their everyday experiences. He was a Being of infinite majesty, holiness, justice, wisdom, and power.

Such a God commands our reverence and submission, but his very grandeur tempts us to doubt whether he really sympathizes with us. And in the heat of life's toil and stress and pain we want to be absolutely sure he understands us, feels our infirmities, shares our sorrows. We want someone on the throne who knows what it means to be tempted, tried, and troubled. We want someone there who is wholly like us, not just "wholly other." Else how can we confide in him?

This is exactly what the ascension does for us. It assures us of God's sympathy. Not a pang of our mortal agony, but Jesus has felt it. Not a throb, or ache, or tear, but he has shared it. On earth he walked each step of our pilgrim way to the end of the last dark, bitter mile. And this same Jesus Christ is the ascended Son of God. He has returned to the Father, not in his eternal deity alone, but in the union of his divine and human

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natures. He has carried his perfect manhood with him to the throne, and we can be certain that through him God deals with us in perfect understanding.

> Though now ascended up on high,
> He bends on earth a brother's eye;
> Partaker of the human name,
> He knows the frailty of our frame.
> Our fellow-suff'rer yet retains
> A fellow-feeling of our pains;
> And still remembers in the skies
> His tears, and agonies, and cries.

When we see Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, all our doubts and fears about God's sympathy for us disappear. To paraphrase slightly the words of Hebrews, "Having such a divine sympathizer in heaven, with confidence we can draw near to the throne of grace, knowing we shall receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Already we can understand why the apostles returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. Already we begin to feel their gladness.

Next, the joy of the ascension is the joy of new access to God.

There come hours to all of us when we instinctively sense that we were made for better things than this world affords. Eternity tugs at our hearts. It whispers that we have come from God and in him is our true home. Desire for communion with our creator rises up from the hidden depths of the subconscious.

But how can we approach him? Not only does he seem distant from us; we know that something is radically wrong between us. We are not on speaking terms with him. We have offended him, outraged him, kindled his wrath against us. He is the high and holy One, but we are sinners. We do not need clever arguments to prove our sinfulness. Nor can pseudopsychological theories explain it away. Conscience thunders our guilt, nothing will silence it. Our sins have separated us from God, and we grope for a way across the gap.

The Old Testament tabernacle, Israel's meeting place with God, vividly illustrates this isolation. It had three compartments: outer court, holy place, and Holy of Holies — the inmost shrine where God manifested himself in the Shekinah cloud of glory. No one except the high priest ever passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies, and he but once each year on the great Day of Atonement. Then, bearing the blood of sacrifice he entered the awesome Presence on behalf of his people. In his person they obtained access to God, but only representatively.

The author of Hebrews finds the fulfillment of this Old Testament ritual in our Lord's ascension. "Christ has entered," he writes, "not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." Further on he exhorts his readers, "Since we have confidence to enter the (heavenly) sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . . "

In other words, having once-for-all atoned for our sins, Christ, who is both our high priest and sacrifice, passed into the very presence of God in heaven on our behalf. But in the ascended Christ we have much more than a mere priestly representative in the eternal Holy of Holies. Because of our spiritual union with him we can actually draw near to God ourselves.

In Christ we have immediate access to God. We are not held back in some outer court. We come in spirit directly to the Father's throne, apart from any human mediation.

In Christ we have individual access to God. Each of us personally approaches him in the privateness of his own feelings and the separateness of his own needs to worship, to commune, and to ask what he will. None is forgotten; none is overlooked; none is turned away.

And in Christ we have inviolable access to God; no one can ever obstruct our way to him. Only we ourselves can do that by our unconfessed and unforsaken sin. Whenever we come to him in humble penitence and faith, we find him ready, waiting to receive us.

There is a bridge across the chasm. There is a path through the once trackless desert. We can now make our way to the throne of God. This, too, is the message of the ascension, and our hearts rejoice in it.

Again, the joy of the ascension is the joy of Christ's universal presence.

Throughout his earthly life Jesus was subject to all our natural human limitations. St. Luke tells us that he grew physically, mentally, and spiritually. At Jacob's well he begged a drink of a Samaritan woman to quench his thirst. Fatigued by his demanding labors, he slept through a storm on Galilee, until the terror-stricken twelve awoke him. Of course his divine nature lost none of its powers when he became incarnate, but it was largely concealed beneath his humanity, flashing openly into view only when he willed. When certain teachers denied Christ's real manhood, the early church rightly condemned their doctrine as heretical. From Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Capernaum to Calvary, Jesus lived under the same essential conditions as we do.

It goes without saying, therefore, that while here in the flesh he could be only one place at a time. People who desired his help either had to go to him themselves, or at least get word to him.

Even during the interval between the resurrection and the ascension, having already entered upon the liberty of his risen life, Christ did not manifest himself at different places simultaneously. The apostles must wait in their anguish while he went to comfort the Magdalene.

Now the ascension changed all that. It brought forever to an end the restriction of his presence. Leaving earth behind and returning to heaven in his glorified manhood, Christ has become universally accessible. For heaven is not far, far away, as some suppose. It lies everywhere around us, is even within us.

We may compare the relation between the eternal and temporal realms to two concentric spheres. The eternal is the larger of the two and touches the temporal at every point. By returning to the eternal world Christ now fills the whole universe with his presence. The apostle says, "He ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." He went away from us so that in his Spirit he might come closer to us than he had ever been to men when he walked with them in the days of old. Only after the ascension could his promise come true, "I am with you always."

Think what this has meant to his followers through the centuries! Think what it means to us today! Because Christ is everywhere Christians can all worship in his presence at the same time. Because Christ is everywhere you and I can pray to him in our homes, at our work, in our automobiles, knowing that he hears us. Because Christ is everywhere we can hear his living voice speaking through the Scriptures. Because Christ is everywhere we can find in him strength to conquer our temptations, courage to face our hardships, comfort in our sorrows, and pardon for our sins. All this floods our hearts with gladness and rejoicing. All this we owe to his ascension.

Once more, the joy of the ascension is the joy of Christ's promised return. Jesus frequently declared that although it was necessary for him to go away, he would come again to earth. These prophecies of his return loomed especially large as he neared the cross. In the Olivet discourse, in the upper room, at his trial before the Sanhedrin, he looked away across the vistas of time to his appearing in majesty at the close of the age.

In the moment of his departure this promise was renewed by messengers sent from God. We read in Acts that while the disciples looked on, Jesus was received up into heaven, and the Shekinah cloud that once flooded the Holy of Holies wrapped and hid him in its blinding glory. Then, as the disciples continued to gaze in wonder at the overarching radiance, two men in white robes appeared to them and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Notice the content of their message: "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." The coming One is no new manifestation of God: he is the very same Man of Nazareth who dwelt here in the flesh, fully human as well as divine. His return will follow the pattern of his departure. As he left in person, so he will come back in person. As he left in his glorified body, so he will come back in his glorified body. As he left in sight of men, so he will return in sight of men. Only then, as we learn elsewhere, not a mere handful of select disciples, but every eye will see him.

Some day the ascension will be reversed. As history unfolds, it moves with steady purpose towards its predestined goal and consummation in the revelation of Jesus Christ on earth as king of all creation, judge, and arbiter of human destiny. Here he was despised and rejected. Here he shall be seen victorious over all his foes. Here he was crowned with thorns. Here he shall be crowned with glory. Here he was humiliated and put to death on a cross. Here he shall be honored and adored. He who humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the shameful death of the cross, has since been highly exalted. God has bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As surely as God has raised him up to sit at his right hand, so surely shall he appear in power and glory for vindication before all men.

With that prospect in view, the disciples went back to Jerusalem. From there they pushed into the far reaches of the world, bearing his name in their hearts and on their lips with unspeakable, exalted joy. Do you share their vision of the ascended Lord? Do you see in it the promise and pattern of his triumphant return? Then you will rise above the bafflements of time and circumstance on the same wings of exultation.

Finally, the joy of the ascension is the joy of certain reunion with Christ in heaven. In the gathering gloom of that night before the cross, Jesus told the eleven that their separation from his tangible presence would be temporary. "In my Father's house are many rooms," he said. "If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." Later in his high priestly intercession, he prayed, "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am."

The New Testament leaves no shred of doubt as to the nature of this reunion. It is not an impersonal condition of being in some land of nowhere, entered only through the portals of the

grave. It is not some shadowy existence in a disembodied state. Listen to one of Paul's classical descriptions of it: "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord."

Three principal facts concerning our reunion with Christ emerge from these passages; first, it will be in the Father's house; second, it will be in the body, that is, in the completeness of our human nature; third, it will never end.

How can we who bear the marks of earth upon us inherit life eternal in God's immediate presence? How can humanity be caught up into perfect union with the deity?

The ascension of Jesus answers the problem. It was no disembodied spirit, but the glorified God-Man, who went up to the throne from Olivet. He preceded us into the Father's house and thus opened the way for us to follow. Now he is preparing our eternal dwellings. Do you recall how the author of the Hebrews refers to Christ as our "forerunner"? Among the Greeks the word forerunner designated the members of a reconnaissance party sent ahead to spy out the enemy's territory and military strength in order that their troops might make a successful invasion. So Jesus has gone ahead into heaven to provide for our safe and sure arrival. The ancient Hebrews never followed their high priest into the inner sanctuary. Unlike them, however, we shall at last enter the heavenly sanctuary, where our brother-priest sits at God's right hand. Where manhood has gone in Jesus Christ, it may — yes, it shall — also go in us who are his kin.

Nelson, the heroic British admiral, once chased to the West Indies a fleet nearly twice as large as his own. Recording the hazards and hardships of that exploit, one of his commanders wrote: "We are half-starved, and otherwise inconvenienced by being so long out of port. But our reward is — we are with Nelson."

Pursuing the enemy fleets across the high seas is not half so demanding on the soul as carrying the cross of Christian discipleship. But we who bear it have a reward that far outweighs that of Nelson's men. For we are with One infinitely greater than any Nelson. We are with Christ. And when the days of cross-bearing are over, we shall be with Christ in his glory forever.

Just as it has made possible our companionship with Christ here on earth, the ascension also assures us of our eternal reunion with him in heaven. So, in the spirit of the first disciples, come down from the mount of vision. Return to your Jerusalem. And continue on your way rejoicing, till at last the glory dawns in blessings on your heads. Amen.

A Reply to Mr. Janssen

MR. William Janssen's reply [Mar. '61], to my article, "Art in the Pulpit" [Dec. '60], is well taken and helps to point up the issues involved in any discussion of Christian faith and the arts. My position is obviously that of a *qualified* "culture-Protestantism." But if we have learned anything from the Barthians, it is that the holiness of God always stands in judgment upon all our attempts to achieve a "Christian culture." Mr. Janssen's comments are significant as an expression of this sense of the Holy. However, I feel that his "rebuttal" misunderstands the nature of the arts and thereby confuses the sense in which I believe the arts can be helpful to the preacher in his preaching and ministry.

I would certainly grant that neither *Baby Doll* nor *Sanctuary* can qualify, aesthetically or "theologically," as the best play or novel of our time or even as the best of Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner. As for Williams, I nominate *A Streetcar Named Desire* for his best play. Concerning Faulkner's *Sanctuary,* Hyatt Waggoner has noted in his essay on Faulkner in *The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith* that the novel remains "close to despair at all times."[1] Except for the possibility that the baby in the box behind the stove may have some relation to the Christ child in the manger, *Sanctuary* gives us a picture of life that is utterly meaningless. *Time,* in its review of the recent filming of *Sanctuary,* says: "Producer Richard Zanuck's attempt to clean up Faulkner for the family seems a bit like trying to smear the whole of Yoknapatawpha County with underarm deodorant. It might just possibly be done, but it sure does seem a peculiar thing to try."[2] "Peculiar" precisely because the tragic world which Faulkner has given us in *Sanctuary,* when provided with a too-easy (and unchristian) solution to the "mess" of human life, becomes a world of mere degradation from which the vision of the ultimate tragedy of such a world has been removed! It must not be forgotten that redemption follows upon the heels of the tragic vision, that it is possible only when we have seen ourselves as sinners who must confess our sin. Waggoner says of Nancy in *Requiem for a Nun,* she is "one of the redeemed, and redeemed precisely because, as 'Negro, dopefiend, whore,' she has suffered and learned her need to be saved."[3]

As for the motives of writers such as Faulkner and Williams, I think it sufficient to quote from Williams' preface (should the artist talk about his art?) to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof:*

> . . . whatever the risk of being turned a cold shoulder, I still don't want to talk to people only about the sur-

[1] Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (ed.), *The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith* (New York: Association Press, 1957). Used by permission.

[2] *Time* Magazine, February 24, 1961, p. 40.

[3] *Op. cit.*

face aspects of their lives, the sort of things that acquaintances laugh and chatter about on ordinary social occasions. . . . The discretion of social conversation, even among friends, is exceeded only by the discretion of "the deep six," that grave wherein nothing is mentioned at all.[4]

Neither Williams nor Faulkner is a Christian clergyman responsible for preaching the gospel, but it does not here appear that their purpose in their art is wholly antithetical to our own. The best and most serious artists, either intentionally or inadvertently, present us with new images of our human situation, images of sin, hell and redemption. As Amos Wilder put it, "The poets [and not simply those who use verse] know how to break up the crust and to make us know again in our own present what sin, hell, revelation and new birth can mean."[5]

To go a step further, it must be said that the function of the arts is simply *to help us know the meaning of the world* with all its sin and hell and longing for redemption. Mr. Janssen says, "I wonder how the kind of literature here in question can help save us. . . ." Neither literature nor any other form of art can "save" us. John W. Dixon, Jr. (of Florida Presbyterian College) helps to clarify this point:

> Man is fallen and his art can both manifest and analyze his sin. . . . Man cannot make a redemptive art but he can make an art that communicates what he experiences of redemption as a man and what he knows of it as an artist. God in his infinite wisdom may use an art work as an instrument of redemption but what serves or can serve that purpose is beyond the knowledge of man.[6]

Now, to get to the heart of the matter, the issue of the relation of Christian faith and the arts is that of the relation of gospel and world, of faith and genius. It is of the essence of the aesthetic vision that it is concerned with the world, that it searches for reality with the senses. Yet a genuine prophetic consciousness of the holiness of God (and not just the puritanistic aloofness of American Protestantism toward everything which the theologian might define as "demonic") makes it impossible for faith ever to be reconciled with the sensuous genius of the artist with his love for the world and his own claims to an *immediate* relation both to the divine and to the demonic. If this be so, are we not now at an impasse in the relation of Christian faith and the arts? I think not.

The world *re*presented to us in the work of the artist is the same world which God created and now seeks to redeem. To the extent that the artist reflects the present state of the world's sin and redemption, he becomes the ally of those whose vocation it is to preach the judgment and grace of God. If, as he looks at the world, God does not appear to the artist, if everything that passes before his vision is tragic (as surely most of our secular, sex-obsessed, war-threatened world now is), the artist can in all honesty and integrity merely reflect a world without God, a world thus tragic. And if the church and the clergy cease to represent a radically redemptive gospel which is relevant to the economic, racial and political crises of our time, the artist must also express this. (Reread Faulkner's *Sanctuary* with an eye upon his criticisms of the southern churches. Is there *truth* in what he says?) If, on the other hand, the artist has seen redemption follow confession and acceptance, he may express this. Is it not the understanding of confession as the precondition of man's exit from hell which informs Jean-Paul Sartre's modern classic, *No Exit*, a play by France's most outspoken atheist? And what of Kafka and Beckett and Camus? Will Herberg (whom Mr. Janssen quotes) has said:

> The example of Camus is enough to show that the religious problem may well be raised by a writer who is himself no believer, who is himself even hostile to religion; it is not only Graham Greene or François Mauriac, it is also Albert Camus, who opens up for us the religious dimension of life.[7]

Now, far from asserting anything "inane and ludicrous," I wish to reassert my belief that it is only as we see the artist — obsessed with the revelation of the reality of the world — as one who provides us with "a valuable source of insight into the very life Christ came to redeem" that we can see in him an ally in the task of making the gospel relevant to modern man. This is an invaluable contribution and one which the church can ignore only to her own peril.

FINLEY EVERSOLE

Nashville, Tennessee

[4] Copyright 1955 by Tennessee Williams. Reprinted by permission of New Directions, publishers.

[5] Amos N. Wilder, "Modern Poetry and the Gospel," *The Christian Century*, February 22, 1961, p. 235.

[6] John W. Dixon, Jr., *Form and Reality: Art as Communication* (Nashville: The Board of Education of The Methodist Church, 1957), pp. 7, 8. Used by permission.

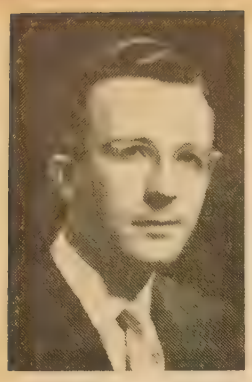
[7] Will Herberg in *Literature and Religion Newsletter*, Drew University, Spring-Summer, 1960, p. 5. Used by permission.

Questions About Relevancy

(Continued from page 3)

any distrust of the gospel's authenticity. Rather the parabolic structure of his preaching revealed his awareness of the fact that the most passionate and purest proclamation of the gospel must be followed by the explanatory note and, often, the hortative comment: "This means . . . This is like unto . . . This do."

Many of the preaching techniques used by the Master are now in disrepute: he analyzed the needs of men, he sought communication with them through parables, he furnished his preaching with moral lessons, he used direct counseling, he put his thought in the sententious form of maxims easily remembered and recalled. This style the rising vogue finds distasteful, but "never man spake like this man." — KYLE HASELDEN



The Silence of the Prophetic Voice

By Ernest Lee Stoffel

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken." Isaiah 1:2

THERE is a concept of the Protestant pulpit that is in danger of disappearing in our time. I refer to the growing silence of the prophetic voice. The voices of the revivalists excoriate and exhort us to receive salvation, but the voice of the prophet is hushed.

The prophetic voice is the voice that speaks for God to the times. This is the biblical meaning of the word "prophet." It does not mean soothsayer or fortune teller. It means one who stands in his own time and speaks for God. The prophetic voice is Isaiah outside the temple in Jerusalem: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken. What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord . . . Bring no more vain offerings . . . your hands are full of blood . . . Wash yourselves . . . remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes . . . seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1). The prophetic voice is forever saying that worship, however pious and orthodox, is unacceptable to God from a people whose hands are full of injustice and oppression.

The prophetic voice is the voice of Jeremiah: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place . . . If you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood . . . if you do not go after other gods . . . then I will let you dwell in this place" (Jeremiah 7). The prophetic voice is forever saying in the name of God that a nation cannot abide that permits injustice within its borders.

The prophetic voice is the voice of John the Baptist beside the Jordan River: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand . . . Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight . . . You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance . . ." (Matthew 3). The prophetic voice is forever saying that the kingdom of God stands over against the kingdom of man and calls constantly for repentance.

Again, the prophetic voice is the voice of Jesus of Nazareth in the market place at Capernaum: "Woe to you, Chorazin . . . woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matthew 11). It is the voice of Jesus of Nazareth who speaks fearlessly to his generation as "an evil and adulterous generation." It is the voice of Jesus of Nazareth who did not fear to stand and say to men to "first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate." He sternly denounced the pious whose face would turn toward their neighbors in hatred and injustice: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law." What did Jesus conceive to be the weightier matters of the law — these, "justice and mercy and faith." The voice of Jesus is the voice of the prophet; so much so that many in his own generation, baffled at what to call him or what to conceive of him, came to this conclusion — that he must be Jeremiah or Isaiah or one of the prophets returned.

The prophetic voice is the voice that cries against oppression and bloodshed; against injustice, false weights, social, class or racial snobbishness. It is the voice that wars against making idols — whether these idols be idols of gold or silver, or chrome, plastic and steel. In the name of the God who made us all, the prophetic voice cries for humanity from man to man; justice for every man and a humble kneeling before the Almighty who looks not upon the outward appearance but upon the heart.

It does not fear to speak against the corrupt national government or a corrupt city government and it will not allow the church of God to become

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the handmaiden of any class or group. It stands against the atheism of communism that would destroy the dignity of the individual personality as well as deny the very existence of God. The prophetic voice says to all who will listen: What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God, and to love thy neighbor as thyself.

The prophetic voice is growing silent in our day because of fear: fear of social pressures, ostracism, dwindling congregations. The prophets in their day had no monument raised to them; they were stoned. Even in the days of the great prophets of the Old Testament, there were many false prophets preaching for money and favor alone, scared of the rulers and scared of the people. They cried, "Peace, peace" when there was no peace and they yielded to the insistent urgings of people: "speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions." The prophet Ezekiel spoke of them contemptuously as those who speak to the people in "whitewashed visions."

There is fear and secondly there is ignorance of what the Bible is really saying. The Bible is not a fetish, nor an end in itself. The Bible is not a collection of proof texts on how to get to heaven. The way to heaven is there, but the Bible is also the living word of God to living people whom God requires to live justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with him.

Jesus had far more to say about how people ought to live in the world and conduct their business and social affairs than he did about repentance, the new birth and eternal salvation. I believe in the necessity of the new birth and I believe in eternal salvation for all who repent and turn to Christ in faith, but the Bible is the *living* word of God and has far more to say to me about how I am to live today than it does about how I am to get to heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a gospel concerned with the hereafter.

What happens when there is no prophetic voice? In I Samuel 3:1 we read of a terrible time that had come upon the children of Israel for this reason: "The word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." Eli had become feeble and unable to speak for God. His two sons were corrupt. If there was any one else in Israel to speak for God, he was silent. So the ancient chronicler wrote this across the chaos of the times: "the word of God was rare." There was no word of correction, no word of guidance and no word of warning, and the nation drifted toward chaos.

Where there is no prophetic voice of warning and guidance, where there is no real preaching of the living Word of God, the people substitute ritual for true religion; they become meticulous in all their observances; they have the form of godliness but they deny the power thereof. The Sabbath, the holy day that is set aside to remind us that we are to honor the living God our Creator and Christ our Savior, is dishonored. Orthodoxy substitutes for justice in the streets. Prophets are employed to speak only what the people want to hear. There is oppression and the killing blight of human hatreds and prejudices. There are bombed schools and churches and synagogues and burning crosses! There is a kind of deadly permissive immorality and lawlessness let loose in the land, and the angels of hell rise again.

We remember that at the turn of the century the German theologians were saying that there should be no interference of religion in worldly affairs. This brought the German church virtually to the place of impotence, when Hitler and nazism arose. Few voices were raised against the regime, until it had achieved a stranglehold on the nation and had set the boots of its soldiers along the way of war.

What shall we do? We must keep the Protestant pulpit free to speak the living word of God, regardless of whether it makes us comfortable or not. If the Spirit of God witnesses to the truth, then in the name of God let it be heard. Let the laity return to know the Word, the Bible, by serious, intelligent study. There was a time when the people would crowd into the church at Geneva to hear John Calvin preach on the Bible. Now if twenty-five come to a Bible study it is considered a success, and the greatest ignorance of the Bible is sometimes to be found within that section of the country that proudly calls itself the "Bible Belt." Let the Bible speak in its historical context and do not subordinate it to the realm of literalistic proof texts. Let the Bible be the two-edged sword of God's truth it has always been and let that truth smite what it will.

Murdo Ewen MacDonald tells of a legend in which Satan called a council of his chiefs to submit their reports. One said, "O Satan I have let loose the wild beast of the desert upon a caravan of Christians, and now they are all dead." Satan was unmoved, "What of that?" he said, "their souls are saved." Another said, "I drove an east wind against a shipload of Christians and they all perished in the sea." Satan still sat unmoved. "What of that?" he said, "their souls are saved." Then one said, "For ten years I have labored to lull a group of Christians asleep, and at last I have succeeded." And at that Satan leaped from his throne and shouted for joy.

The prophetic voice does not make for complacency. Pray God that he will not withdraw his Word from our time. Pray God that he will raise up young men and women who will prophesy, dream dreams, and see visions. Pray that our watchmen may not give an uncertain sound and that we may still have within us the fiber of faith in the living God to put our hands to the battle.

Who Will Teach Us to Pray?

By Harold Wiley Freer

THE seminaries do not. They have turned over the task to groups like the Camps Farthest Out, the Ashrams, the Disciplined Order of Christ, the Unity School of Christianity. Consequently, few ministers and fewer laymen learn to pray other than petitionary prayer.

On commencement day Rod was walking across the seminary campus when he met one of his professors. "Do you believe in prayer?" Rod asked. His professor spluttered in disgust. "Of course I do," he declared. "Am I not both a minister and a professor?" Rod didn't answer him, but later he confided in me: "I was afraid to ask him, 'Then why, in my three years here, didn't you or someone teach me how to pray?' "

In my own seminary days at Union, Dr. Eugene Lyman assigned to members of his introductory philosophy class each year papers on "The Efficacy of Prayer." This subject was not mentioned before nor after the assignment. During the final semester of our senior year, Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin's class in pastoral theology spent one hour talking together about pastoral prayers. We had no assignments to study them nor to write them and, during my three years in seminary, I do not recall any other mention of prayer in the classrooms.

Today few seminaries have courses in the life of prayer, and these few are usually survey courses in devotional classics. Occasionally a speaker from outside may come for a brief talk on some aspect of prayer, but his appearance normally will be in a hastily called assembly or before a small group of interested students.

As a result of this failure to teach the classical paths of prayer, or to introduce students to the masters of spiritual disciplines, seminaries send out their graduates with no preparation for interior prayer. How, then, can they teach their people to pray, when they themselves have not learned to pray?

Fortunately, both for ministers and laymen, beginnings of prayer can be learned in the various meetings of the groups mentioned earlier. In the dozen or so Ashrams each year (founded by E. Stanley Jones), programs on prayer are held. This is also true of the four or five conference-retreats sponsored by the Disciplined Order of Christ (founded by Albert Edward Day). In each of these week-long meetings petition and intercession are stressed, though occasional "seminars" on contemplation or mysticism may be offered.

At Lee's Summit, Missouri, the Unity School of Christianity gathers together men and women — mostly lay people — for extended training in their particular prayer technique. The school also has a group known as Silent Unity, in operation around the clock, to which by mail, telephone, or telegram requests for prayer may be sent. The major work of the school is the mailing of millions of pieces of literature every year; most of it dealing with prayer, especially for healing or for prosperity. Thousands of members of our major denominations use daily prayer pamphlets from Unity.

But unfortunately, none of these groups in actual practice goes much beyond the prayers of petition and intercession. True enough, the major object of prayer is to get something, as both Testaments reveal over and over again. Yet prayer is far more than "the beggar's cup shaken under the nose of God," as Lillian Smith suggests in graphic prose.

Because the practical training that comes through these groups is about all the training most people get, I hasten to commend these various organizations. They are doing their best to offer schools of prayer in which people may learn techniques and practices to take home with them.

However, the time has come to offer classes in the life of prayer which will have sound theological undergirding, an understanding of the classical approaches to prayer, an interpretation of the self in depth, and a creative social outreach. Through various retreat centers, notably Kirkridge, Shadybrook, and Wainwright House, and in some of the retreats of the Disciplined Order of Christ, already such a program has been started. But these meetings are normally for a 36-hour retreat period, or at the most a week, not time enough for the serious training in prayer that both ministry and laity need.

One solution is through required courses in our seminaries, so that no minister will go into a church without proper training in prayer. He will study the classics, yes, bringing a modern analytic point of view to that study. But he himself will also learn to pray the prayers of thanksgiving, confession, forgiveness, adoration, commitment. He will learn the true practice of petition and intercession. As a result of this study and practice, his prayer will be of the heart as well as the mind, the only way in which it may become relevant to our day. Then he will also learn various teaching methods — prayer classes, retreats, discussion groups, seminars — in which he may train his laymen, young and old, in mental prayer.

Another possible answer lies in summer schools or correspondence courses in which those not now trained in interior prayer may begin their study and practice. These courses can be planned either by seminaries or retreat centers, probably with the required help of some religious foundations, or of denominational or interdenominational boards of evangelism and the spiritual life. The finest of leaders and the best of literature would be brought together. Charles Whiston, Douglas Steere, Albert Edward Day, Allan Hunter, John Oliver Nelson, Gerald Heard, John L. Casteel, Nels F. S. Ferré, John Magee are some of the better qualified men for such an approach.

A study course would include the "negative" mystical way of Plotinus, of Dionysius the Areopagite, of Meister Eckhart, along with Zen and classical Buddhism, as well as the "positive" mystical way of Fénelon, of St. Francis of Sales, of Rufus Jones, of Thomas

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HAROLD WILEY FREER, *minister of the First Congregational Church, Crossville, Tennessee, was graduated from the University of Southern California and from Union Theological Seminary, New York City. A retreat leader and director of schools of prayer and prayer institutes, Mr. Freer is national field representative of the Disciplined Order of Christ, founded by Dr. Albert E. Day as a research movement in the life of prayer. He is coauthor of* Two or Three Together *(Harper), a manual designed to help those forming new prayer groups.*

Kelly. It would compare and contrast Underhill's *Mysticism* and Heiler's *Prayer*. It would consider Baker's *Holy Wisdom* and Poulain's *The Graces of Interior Prayer* on one hand, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, De Caussade's *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*, and Nygren's *Agape and Eros* on the other.

Along with this would belong Progroff's *Depth Psychology and Modern Man*, Loomis' *The Self in Pilgrimage*, Roberts' *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man*, Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Fromm, Suzuki, and de Martino's *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis;* also Steer's *Work and Contemplation*, Calhoun's *God and the Common Life*, Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness*, Bishop's *All Things Common*, and Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion*.

This is no daily reading from a tiny pamphlet, with a Scripture text, a bright little comment, and a brief prayer. This is meat to chew on, that spiritual muscle may develop.

But what seminary will begin required courses in prayer? Who will set up summer schools and extended programs in which ministers and lay people may enroll? Who will plan and organize and direct correspondence courses by which we may learn to go beyond petition and intercession? Who will teach us to pray?

Among Us—

Teaching Our People How To Handle Bereavement

Ministering to the Bereaved

By John G. Ferry

AN ancient legend has it that a woman whose child had died went to Buddha and asked that he might restore the child to life.

"Take a bowl, my daughter," said Buddha gently, "and go to every home in the city and beg a peppercorn. But take none from any person who has ever suffered sorrow or bereavement." The woman set out eagerly to fill the bowl, that she might win Buddha's blessing. But when night came her bowl was still empty.

Death is something people tend to ignore until one day they are suddenly overwhelmed by grief. Not until then do they realize how devastating, how universal, bereavement can be.

Though some people are able to take bereavement in their stride, others are so completely overwhelmed that it alters the whole pattern of their personalities, making them emotional cripples for the rest of their lives. Many such catastrophes could in my estimation be avoided if we ministers were more alert to the need to have our people do some careful thinking about death before they are emotionally overwhelmed by it; for it is difficult to think constructively about such an experience when emotions are in a turmoil of grief.

Mrs. Winters was seventy when I first met her. She had a wonderfully kind husband; a married daughter; two lovely grandchildren, and a son who had just been graduated from medical college. Yet she was a bitter, disillusioned, old woman. Not until several months after our meeting did I discover that she had grown bitter after having lost a child at birth, almost fifty years before. This woman had life and love flowing richly all around her, yet she had made herself and her loved ones unhappy for half a century because she had been unable to handle bereavement.

Mrs. Winters, unfortunately, is only one of many who have grown morose and bitter, hiding a broken heart behind a hard and callous facade, which shuts them off from all the normal and satisfying relationships of life. This is peculiarly true of women who lose children at birth, simply because they are unable to reconcile such a tragedy with a God of love. An alert pastor will see to it that no such theological problems are left unresolved in the bereaved person's mind. Much pastoral care beyond the date of the funeral may be necessary before a complete adjustment can be effected.

Tragedy can strike with cruel and devastating suddenness, leaving deep emotional scars for years to come. One summer day, faced with a sudden breakdown in his harvesting equipment, Bill Smith, a young farmer on the Canadian prairie, jumped into his truck to dash to town for needed repairs. In his haste to back his truck out of the driveway he failed to see, until too late, that his little son was playing behind it. It was a contrite, grief-stricken father who picked up a crumpled little form and carried it tenderly into the house. Suddenly, harvest ceased to have any real meaning for Bill Smith. For several years now, harvest time has brought its own peculiar sorrow to this young father who pauses in his work to look sadly across the golden stubble fields to a little cemetery on the edge of town; each year to calculate mentally how old Billy would be — had he but lived.

How different people will react to a tragic situation such as this it is difficult to say. But it can cripple them emotionally. Or, destroy forever their happiness and the happiness of the loved ones who must continue to live with them and to endure their suffering unless, through the ministry of a kind and understanding pastor, they learn how to handle their bereavement intelligently.

Death brings with it a peculiar mixture of separation, shock, sorrow, and self-pity. The initial shock comes with the realization that a loved one is dead. But the full impact is not felt until after the funeral is over, the friends and loved ones gone back to their work and their homes, and life has settled into a routine again. Now the initial shock is heightened by an overwhelming sense of loneliness. Time for the bereaved ceases to have any meaning. But life surges on around them as if nothing had happened.

It is at this point that bereaved people often feel resentment against the rest of the world because it won't linger and sorrow with them. Unless positive steps are taken to combat this overwhelming sense of isolation and loneliness a psychotic pattern may develop.

Mrs. Johnstone was grief-stricken

JOHN G. FERRY *is minister of St. John's United Church of Canada in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia. He has had many articles and sermons published in both secular and religious journals and is at present working on a volume of funeral sermons. Because Victoria's population includes a great many people of retirement age, Dr. Ferry tells us that he has had more than the usual number of funerals in his parish and it was from this background of experience that the accompanying article was written.*

"HAVE YOU A WILL?"

By Andrew Hobart,
President,
Ministers Life & Casualty Union

Have you ever stopped to consider what happens to your estate after your death? Sounds simple—it goes to your heirs. But have you made provisions for the division of your estate? Your state law does it for you unless you have looked to the future and made proper plans. The making of a will, like insurance, is something that too often gets put off until "tomorrow". Before you let it slip by again, ask yourself these questions . . .

Do I want the court to decide where my dependent children will spend the rest of their dependent lives if my wife and I die in a common disaster?

Have I planned my estate so that my widow will have what she needs, and so that the court will not be forced to ignore her needs and include the children in the division?

Your will transfers more than mere property and other tangibles. You transfer your parental concern as well. It adds a dimension which rises higher than the mortal or temporal.

There is no time like the present to sit down with your lawyer and review your estate. He will help you draw up a will to take care of the needs of your wife and children. If you already have a will, take another look at it. Perhaps things have changed and it should be rewritten to include new additions in estate and family.

Don't forget your insurance program plays an important part in the future happiness of your family. Write to Ministers Life for aid in building a proper program to meet your need.

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when her husband died. She lost weight, she suffered from insomnia. She became, before long, merely a haggard shadow of her former self. She withdrew from all social activities in the community and in her home, even in the middle of the day, kept the shades drawn against the sunshine so that the interior gloom matched that of her soul. It wasn't until I discovered that Mrs. Johnstone was the second wife of the deceased man and that she was grieving secretly over the belief that her husband was now "with that other woman," also deceased, that I was able to help her. A belief in eternal life which should have brought her comfort aroused instead a feeling of jealousy, thus delaying her recovery.

For several years now I have ministered to an average of one bereaved family every two weeks. Often there have been as many as three deaths in one week. Although this does not make me an authority on the subject, it has given me an opportunity to draw some conclusions and to revise others through firsthand experience. For I not only minister to these families at the time of the funeral but continue to give pastoral oversight until I am satisfied that a proper adjustment has been made. And though this may not be the last word on handling bereavement intelligently, I offer the following suggestions because I have found them helpful in my ministry.

People who bottle up their grief, who refuse to give way to their feelings, frequently experience an emotional explosion of the delayed action sort because emotional tension has been allowed to build, like steam in a boiler, until it can be contained no longer. Grief is nature's way of bringing emotional release. It is a way of expressing love as well as sorrow and it should not be thwarted. Encouraging the bereaved to talk about the deceased person, giving him an opportunity to express his appreciation for the life just passed, will help bring release from tension.

Those who are aware of this will not be guilty when they confront bereaved people of counseling them to be brave or to keep a stiff upper lip. They will be sensitive enough to sit down and share for a few moments that grief which is bearing heavily upon the bereaved. So many people complain that they don't know what to say to bereaved people. Say nothing. Let the bereaved person do the talking. Just be a good listener and you'll discover that you can render no greater service.

However, both the minister and the bereaved person should be alert to the danger that grief can degenerate into a chronic form of self-pity. Therefore, as soon as the funeral is over, some meaningful activity should be planned. This will help to create a new center of meaning and purpose for life, a center which may be needed to replace the purposeful activities of the past which have suddenly lost their relevance because of the death of the loved one.

That person is fortunate who has so many family or financial obligations that he must immediately throw himself into his work in order to meet the pressing demands of daily life. Those who have nothing with which to occupy their hearts and hands are the ones who suffer most from bereavement. However, there are some steps that can be taken to compensate for the lack of creative or purposeful activity.

One family I know moved completely away from the home which they had owned for many years and rented another house in the same community. The father for whom they mourned had been an invalid for a long time and moving to a new house was a way of establishing a different pattern of life removed from old and familiar associations. Some people may consider it callous to try to forget in this way. But actually their memories were more precious than they would otherwise have been. It was possible to think of the old home as a chapter of life in which they all had shared, the deceased father included. When, several years later, they moved back to the old family home the readjustment had been made and cherished memories were reawakened. But the wound of sorrow had, in the meantime, been allowed to heal.

Not every family is fortunate enough to be able to do this, nor would everyone do so if he could. But even the change of scenery afforded by a short trip can help in the emotional readjustment that is required. It could perhaps be a trip to renew acquaintance with old friends or loved ones that had been planned for years but postponed for one reason or another. In any case steps should be taken, both physically and mentally, toward the realization that, in spite of grief, life must go on and that it may still be satisfying and worthwhile.

This adjustment may be accomplished more quickly if people can be encouraged to separate their subjective from their objective thoughts where grief is concerned. First of all they should think of the one who is deceased. If the loved one has been a chronic sufferer over a long period of time surely they would not want to see him involved in the suffering from which he has so recently been released. Death can be a great blessing in some cases of prolonged suffering and we do well to appreciate this fact.

Belief about life after death will also have some effect on how people face up to grief. Since this is a universal belief shared by many people both within and without the Christian faith, they can take satisfaction from the knowledge that, if they believe in life after death, they are in excellent company. Saints, scientists, and philosophers, as well as our native Indians, have all known the satisfac-

tion which comes from the faith that life has a purpose and that our best-loved are not ultimately "cast as rubbish to the void." The importance of driving home this truth must keep the busy pastor from allowing a funeral service to degenerate into a perfunctory ritual. Each funeral address should be carefully tailored to meet the exact needs of the bereaved family as you understand them. This involves a pastoral visit prior to the funeral, just as soon as it can be conveniently arranged after you have learned of the death. This visit can be of inestimable value even when you are ministering to entire strangers. And needless to say it lifts you above the level of a mere functionary to that of pastor and friend.

If bereaved people can be convinced of the love of God and the eternal dimension of human personality, then even the death of a little child can be regarded as a rebirth to a fuller and a richer life than that child could ever know here upon earth. For to believe in eternity is to believe that it is a richer life by far than is our earthbound existence. If you are successful in assuring people that those who die are secure in our Father's care, then they can be led to the conclusion much more readily that what remains of grief must be subjective.

It can then be pointed out that as a deceased loved one was unhappy in this life when they were sad, so they must realize that he would be unhappy now if the bereaved continued to grieve unduly. If they realize that the deceased desires their health and happiness more than anything else, then they will be aware that they honor him in striving to regain their emotional poise as quickly as possible.

Occasionally I have found people who have apparently experienced a brief feeling of relief at the death of some member of the family only to relapse into a state of emotional shock later through a feeling of guilt when they realized that they were actually glad when that person died. This happens often where chronic illness is involved, particularly if the invalid has been tyrannical and demanding.

It should be pointed out that such feelings of release are only natural under the circumstances and they ought not to be allowed to engender feelings of guilt which, unless discharged effectively, can build up to trouble. The best possible way to accomplish this is to allow them to talk out their guilt, help them to look at their feelings objectively, and assure them of the love and understanding and forgiveness of God who knows us better than we know ourselves. The value of prayer on such occasions ought not to be overlooked.

There are few occasions when a minister will have the opportunity of coming closer to his people, or meeting their needs more completely, than when he identifies himself with them in their sorrow, for it is a universal experience.

Book Reviews

PROTESTANT THOUGHT AND NATURAL SCIENCE. *By John Dillenberger. Doubleday. $4.50.*

THIS ponderous volume by John Dillenberger, historian and theologian at Drew University, is in a sense the story of the sin of dogmatism from the 16th century until our own day. One gathers from his competent evaluation and analysis of the thought of both scientists and theologians during the past 500 years that any new idea, boldly born and hopefully expressed by our greater minds, is immediately siezed upon by our lesser — either to make it do service to past ways of thinking or to attempt to discredit it altogether.

By maintaining a receptive and impressionable mind toward all the ideas he is dealing with (see p. 15 for his declaration of neutrality among the dogmatists), the author manages to engender in his reader a new respect for all attempts of the human mind to cope with the riddle of existence. Great creative sallies in human thought are to be welcomed for the new light they shed. Too often they are hailed as enemies that threaten our security rather than as new friends that wish to broaden our horizons.

Ideas so treated have their revenge, the writer shows. The revolution in science (mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology), because it was at first rejected by the church as destructive, ended in the 19th century by enlisting the theologians themselves in its own camp. Schleiermacher and Ritschl were forced to defend Christianity in the only terms the world would listen to. The author's observation at the end of chapter eight is excellent: "The Darwinian impact was the final threat to all the vertical and depth dimension within man and the cosmos. It marked the culmination of a period in which no adequate symbols were left for expressing and thinking about the classical Christian heritage. The symbols of this culture enslaved the very Christianity expressed through it. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may have been one of those rare periods in history in which theology was virtually impossible, when the

Karl Barth

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Sermons and Prayers

DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES

KARL BARTH is known in every corner of the Christian world as one of the great theologians of the 20th century. In this book he is revealed for the first time as a compassionate pastor as well.

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crises of language and imagination excluded the essential depth of both God and man" (p. 251).

Commenting on the same phenomenon in the second part of the volume, the author speaks of "a liberal Protestantism, which had been formed by the content of the very culture it was trying to transform" (p. 257). This dilemma has been broken in our modern times, he goes on to say, by Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich. They are leading representatives in the theology of the trend in all modern thought away from the naive insistence upon gathering into one system all the strands of human knowledge. This does not mean that anyone should work in his discipline without reference to what is going on in another. It means rather that each should concentrate in his own without fear of dogmatic reproach from another and with humble acknowledgment too of the possible relevance to his own endeavors of what others are doing and saying.

Evidence of the author's own profound convictions about the Christian faith, though he refuses to hold them dogmatically, is his treatment of the 17th and 18th century attempts to defend Christianity by the rationalistic use of miracle and prophecy ("the evidences"). On page 146, he superbly contrasts the use of miracles and prophecy by the early church with its use by the rationalistic defenders of Christianity.

Not the least value of this rather intricately and at times not too luminously written book is the sense it provides the reader of how the great thinkers of history learn from and lean upon each other. No thinker so original or creative but he is debtor to some earlier if perhaps less articulate pioneer. — *Henry B. Kuizenga, First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor, Mich.*

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THE CHANGING AMERICAN FAMILY. *By Roger Crook. Bethany. $2.95.*

GROWING UP IN CHRIST. *By Frances Wilkinson. Seabury. $2.00.*

REDEMPTIVE COUNSELING. *By Dayton VanDeusen. John Knox. $3.50.*

THE church's ministry to the family is increasingly recognized as a central concern. This is particularly true in America where mobility, prosperity and industrialization make inroads on the cohesive ties which once held the family as a firm core of society. The Lambeth Conference of 1958 dealt articulately with the Christian family and has given rise to more intense study of the family as such throughout the Protestant church.

Roger Crook's sociological study ranges from scriptural descriptions of the family to mixed marriages to a prescription for Christianizing the home. This last effort is a naive conclusion to an otherwise competent analysis. John Dewey is epitomized as the devil in transforming the American ideal, and participation in the Christian church is the suggested means of redeeming the family from this unhappy state of things. The book tries to cover too much ground and lacks a sound understanding of the heart of the family today.

Mrs. Wilkinson's book puts family relations and family activities in fresh terms. Her outlook is highly perceptive of the very matters Mr. Crook's work neglects. Prayer, discipline, stewardship, involvement in school and a dozen other key concerns are dealt with in a mature way — and always with pithy language. For example: "God set us in families in order that we might be schooled in human relationships before we become adult and have to face the more complicated relationships of the world at large." Again: "What the marriage service says in effect, is that if there are doubts in your mind as to whether you hope to have children, you have misunderstood God's purpose in marriage. When God gave us the gifts of sex, he gave us at the same time the idea of the Family. . . ." On the church: "You will have to accept the nakedness and embarrassment which are the price of fellowship, and without which we cannot experience its vitality." This English housewife has struck a note of vital Christian experience within the family which deserves thoughtful reading.

Redemptive Counseling is hardly a handbook for counselors, but it explores the underlying assumptions that give foundation to the Christian who counsels. That is, a counselor who looks beyond the "adjustment" of the client to society as is — such aspiration needs to be firmly rooted in convictions and concerns — will find here a rewarding treasure of background considerations. The place of the self, the contrast between flesh and spirit, the nature of redemption, the need for a mediator, the aim of the counselor — these are but a few of the milestones a thoughtful counselor should pass before sitting across the table from a troubled person. And Dr. VanDeusen deals with them free from the illusions of grandeur that plague many another Christian who counsels. The language is nontechnical, Scripture quotations are apt, and the outlook is one of disciplined empathy. — *Lawrence L. Gruman, University Congregational Church, Missoula, Montana.*

JESUS AND THE TRINITY. *By Walter Russell Bowie. Abingdon. $2.75.*

THIS is a useful book for any man who wants a clear, readable and religiously helpful handling of a notoriously difficult subject. It should have permanent value for teachers and guides of intelligent and inquiring adults.

Dr. Bowie's argument in this book marches resolutely forward in the path of a special and very valuable treatment of trinitarian thought. He insists that each step forward grew out of a religious experience which both inspired and puzzled men. They knew Jesus and they could not rest without asking questions about his significance. What new element of meaning in our thought of God and life did the fact and history of Jesus suggest? "Jesus and the Trinity." Dr. Bowie never departs far from the point of view which that title suggests.

The book traces clearly, and without too much detail, the stages in the forward movement of interpretation of this religious experience: Paul,

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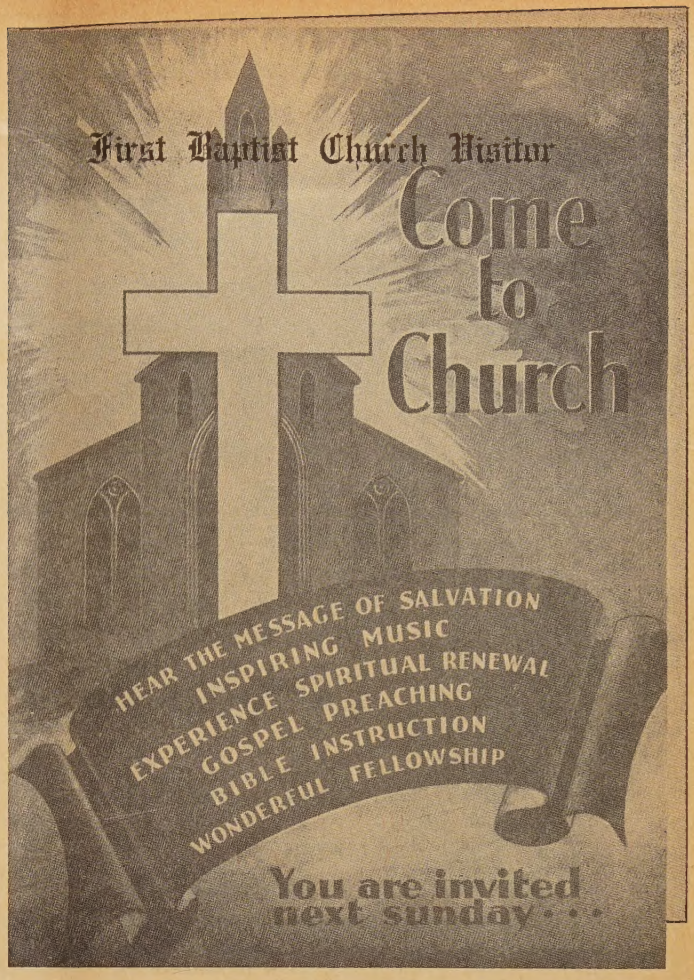

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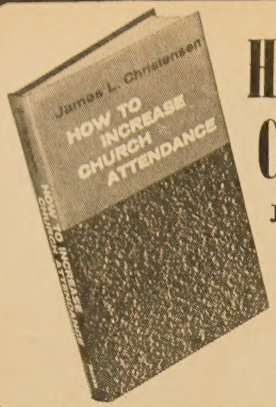

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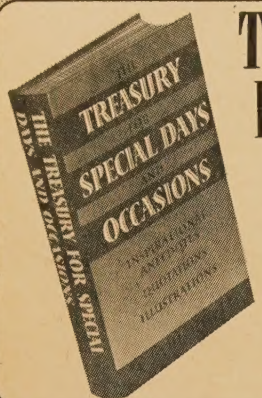

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some of whose phrases miss the trinitarian position badly; the Fourth Gospel, which is sometimes vague about "spirit," but sure of "another comforter"; the rejection of Gnosticism; the victory of the Athanasian position over the near-deism of Arius; the struggle to escape "modalism," which is still with us; the contributions of recent thought through the analysis of "personality." Always the point of view is that behind the struggle lies "the fact of God actually experienced through Christ."

This is an important approach, very, very useful to all teachers and preachers who must meet the perennial sneers at Christian creeds as "metaphysical subtleties." It makes the trinitarian position an interpretation of important facts of human experience. It leads logically to a final chapter on "dedication" which is a challenge to all of us to rise to richer and more profoundly moving insights into God's nature and work.

Inevitably such a book has limitations. It makes little attempt to discuss original sources in the light of Greek and Hellenistic thought. Its materials are secondary, but very good secondary discussions drawn chiefly from British and American theologians of the last one hundred years.

A more serious question arises from concern about the ultimate validity of this approach. It is extremely useful and satisfying for many purposes. But always there are some men living under great stress who raise questions which will not be silenced by an argument based on other men's experience. Dr. Bowie recognizes this. His quotations from Hardy, Henley, Franklin Lane are apt. He has chapters on "Living Consequences of the Creed," and "Difficulties of the Doctrine," which are interesting and often important. But Dr. Bowie has accepted a different task, specialized and important. He has performed it well. We must not blame him if he does not cover everything in one book.

A further question arises from his treatment of some modern discussions. Does he do full justice to Donald Baillie's point that paradox is inescapable when we deal with separations in the inseparable? Again writers like L. Hodgson, who is impressed by the enrichment of life in complex unities, and Dorothy Sayers, who writes from the experience of a creative artist, have attempted to analyze what is involved in the very nature of personal existence. Dr. Bowie is fearful that such reasoning may involve us in the "projection" of our needs and the character of human minds into the very life of God. Does not this fear lead him to miss the point? Both these writers are arguing that there are moral necessities involved in the very fact of personal existence, whether human or divine. Surely it is an important question whether the recognition of "moral necessities" as a method of knowledge is not compar-

able in validity to the use of "mathematical necessities" as a method in science.

But these are not Dr. Bowie's questions or approach. He has done a special thing, an important and useful thing, and done it well. — *George Vincent, Montclair, N. J.*

PULPIT POST

(Continued from page 2)

And the student can only rejoice when that teacher offers to all by means of print what has previously been largely confined to the classroom.

Such a teacher is Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His book, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), would seem to offer much that Massa and many others are looking for. H. Grady Davis offered an interesting review of this book in the *Christian Century,* June 3, 1959, p. 674.

PHIL SCHROEDER
Union Theological Seminary
New York, N. Y.

Thanks

SIR: Thank you for your editorial on "Sentimentalism" in the March issue, and for printing the letter of "Rebuttal" from William Janssen on the question of "Art." To both of these I would simply add a hearty, "Amen."

ALLAN MCGAW
First Baptist Church
Branford, Conn.

Pulpit Calendar

May 5 — May Fellowship Day.
May 7 — Rural Life Sunday.
May 7 – 14 — National Family Week.
May 11 — Ascension Day.
May 14 — Festival of the Christian Home (Mother's Day).
May 21 — Whitsunday (Pentecost).
May 28 — Trinity Sunday.
May 30 — Memorial Day.
June 4 — 2nd Sunday after Pentecost.
June 11 — Children's Sunday, 3rd Sunday after Pentecost.
June 18 — 4th Sunday after Pentecost.
June 25 — Nature Sunday, 5th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 2 — Independence Sunday, 6th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 4 — Independence Day.
July 9 — 7th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 16 — 8th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 23 — 9th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 30 — 10th Sunday after Pentecost.

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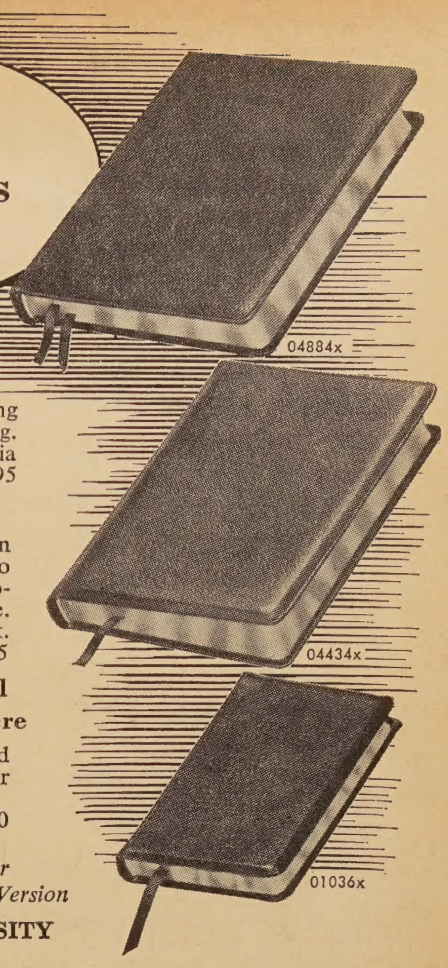

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